SHRINKING CITIES, GROWING RELATIONSHIPS

by

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# Abstract

Shrinking Cities, Growing Relationships

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Across the United States many major cities—particularly in the industrial Northeast and Midwest—are shrinking. Central city populations are relocating to suburban areas in massive numbers causing a self-destructive cycle of vacant lots, economic decline and negative perceptions. Citizens who identify as a community member, have knowledge of issues and participate in the community, known as "active citizens", have long been not only a desired but indeed a crucial part of society. Literature in sociology, philosophy, and public administration presents arguments for the benefits of active citizenship to both the individual and the community. Dialogic communication theory posits that dialogue forms a mutually beneficial relationship between governments and resident publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002). This relationship may help to foster more active citizenship and assist in combating the negative attributes of a shrinking city. To explore the potential role of dialogic communication between resident publics and public officials in shrinking cities, this study drew on interviews of city employees at four shrinking

cities (St. Louis, Rochester, Cleveland and Detroit). Specifically, the goal of these interviews was to examine these professionals' attitudes towards active citizenship and the communication tactics they use when communicating with resident publics in order to combat the common challenges of shrinking cities. The results of this study found that, first, active citizens are important in a community and that they are highly valued by government staff. Second, that the challenges caused by dramatic population loss are complicated, often intertwined, and amplify one another such as vacant homes allowing for increased crime, leading to increased out migration and then, again, increasing the number of vacant homes. This all creates a negative spiral of decline that is extremely difficult to reverse. Professionals in these shrinking cities are leveraging multiple communication tactics to combat this negativity, but most importantly, are working to leverage a relationship with active citizens to collaboratively address the problem. Specifically, this study found that city government professionals have recognized the importance of being transparent in all communication with residents and have been able to leverage strategic communication about the initiatives that the city hosts to reverse the physical decline to additionally help combat the negative image of decline. Further, city professionals have found that engaging with residents in regard to the 'makeover' of the city has cultivated active citizenship within the city and as a result, has promoted rebuilding. Finally, the communication practices that the professionals in these cities are using are indeed dialogical and professionals have repeatedly expressed an interest in becoming even more dialogical with residents.

**Chapter One. Introduction**

Many American cities have experienced significant economic and urban decline as well as population loss as a result of a variety of factors (Rybczynski & Linneman, 1999). The spiral of decline and urban blight is particularly stark in former industrial cities. Scholars who have studied these cities explain the situations as overwhelming, dramatic and alarming (Vey, 2007; Rieniets, 2009). Each of the challenges that these cities face compound one another. Dilapidated infrastructure and vacant lots plague these cities along with extremely high crime rates, which often result in a severe negative image from both internal and external publics that works against any positive efforts to rebuild. These cities are faced with the enormous challenge of rebuilding from decline, or, at a minimum, halting the decline. There are few historical success stories that government leadership and experts within these shrinking cities can look to for best practices, meaning that these professionals are pioneering the rebuilding of declining cities. This is not only a physical problem that can be resolved with common urban planning tactics, the negative image of decline is evidence that there is also a communication issue intertwined within the physical decline. As a result, the challenges faced by shrinking cities cannot be overcome exclusively with communication, nor can they be overcome without a focus on communication. Specifically, residents within these

cities play an important role in rebuilding. Indeed, literature dating back to Aristotle (350 BCE) indicates that the existence of active citizens is critical to the health of communities. Given that residents literally are the population of these cities and in turn, create the community; they must have an active role. The challenges of shrinking cities encompass the entire city; many begin at the neighborhood level, versus at the city-wide policy level, and therefore require active citizens to take part. Simply put, government staff cannot reverse the 'shrink' alone; this must be done through a collaborative partnership with city residents. As a result, these cities have embarked on a number of strategies for rebuilding and revitalization and all of these strategies require some level of buy-in from citizens. Understanding that government staff cannot accomplish this task alone, many are working with private partners and residents in order to pioneer in the process of rebuilding a city.

Public administration literature and research, specifically social capital theory, indicates that a positive relationship with resident publics is crucial to government success. Within communication studies, dialogic theory relates closely to this already established scholarly discussion. In particular, Botan (1993) proposes that a dialogic approach to public relations is the most effective method for engaging publics and that through this approach the publics are viewed as an ends and not a means to an end. These theoretical ideas align closely with the need for active citizens within a thriving community. But what role might public relations play during this rebuilding process? And what does public relations theory have to say about to the relationship between public relations and the cultivation of active citizenship? How do effective or ineffective

public relations on the part of a city truly impact that community and the residents within it? Is it possible to measure these impacts or the relationship between approaches to public relations and city residents?

With this study, I seek to investigate the role of communication, specifically related to public relations, in shrinking cities within the United States. This investigation begins in Chapter 2 with a review of the existing scholarly literature on the challenges faced by shrinking cities, the concept of active citizenship, as well as the benefits of a dialogic approach to public relations. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used for this research including the process used to identify the subject cities and the process used to recruit government representatives, conduct interviews, and analyze interview data. Following this, Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts with regard to the subject areas of active citizenship and dialogic communication between government officials and residents in shrinking cities. Finally, in Chapter 5 this analysis discusses the wider conceptual and practical implications of the findings, particularly with regard to the potential for dialogic communication to cultivate active citizenship within shrinking cities. This section also includes the limitations of the study and potential future research that will continue to advance understanding in this subject area. In the end, I pursue this research because I want to know how city governments are approaching the relationship with their resident publics in light of this slowly developing crisis and to identify the attitudes and strategies that governments' in these situations have with regard to active citizens.

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I will review scholarly literature related to three key concepts in this thesis: active citizenship, shrinking cities, and dialogic public relations theory. The concept of active citizenship has been discussed since the establishment of the first ancient republics, and further investigating this concept identifies why it is important. Public relations plays a critical role in creating strong relationships between governmental institutions and the public, and, at least theoretically, can play a role in encouraging active citizenship. Taken together the literature produced around these three concepts—active citizenship, shrinking cities and dialogic theory—provides the theoretical foundation for the present study.

**Active Citizenship**

Government scholars and practitioners often refer to active citizenship as the gold standard to be achieved in any healthy democracy. But what is active citizenship, and why is it important? The concept of active citizenship dates back to Aristotle (350 BCE) who argued that participation in state affairs was a basic responsibility of humans; differentiating us from both animals, who lack the ability to reason, and the gods, who are presumably self-sufficient. His writings emphasize the importance of society by identifying it as a uniquely human creation, critical to our existence. In this way, participation in governance, in this uniquely human creation, is a necessary and

fundamental part of being fully human. Centuries later, when contemplating the formation of a new nation, Thomas Jefferson echoed these same sentiments. His early drafts of the United States Constitution identified not only the rights but also the responsibilities of citizens (Gunderson, 1987). More recently, within the past century or less, scholars have continued to discuss active citizenship; debating the definition and investigating the importance of an engaged citizenry within all levels of government.

**Defining Active Citizenship.** There are many names for active citizenship such as social participation (Ebersold, 2007), democratic engagement (Delli Carpini, 2004), participatory citizenship (Mohanty & Tendon, 2006), social citizenship (Lister, 2005), or even just simply as citizenship itself (Kymlicka & Norma, 1994), but there is no single defining theory. In the modern era, T. H. Marshall (1951) arguably initiated contemporary interest in the concept of active citizenship when he published an influential essay entitled "Citizenship and the Social Class." Marshall argued for the need to cultivate active citizenship within the United Kingdom, where citizens often struggled to find a voice between the institutions of parliamentary democracy and the royal monarchy. Marshall argued that active citizenship was comprised of rights and responsibilities within three related dimensions: civic, political and social. In these three dimensions, civic relates to personal freedoms, political relates to participation in government, and social relates to participation in society. Marshall goes on to emphasize that "Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed." (1951, p. 149-150). For their part, Kymlicka and Norman (1994)

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helped to translate this argument into one appropriate for the United States and in doing so helped to define what active citizenship is for Americans. Their argument mirrors Marshall's and those of Thomas Jefferson, concluding that active citizenship is more than individual rights but also includes individual responsibilities.

With regard to the rights of citizens, the civil element of citizenship includes individual freedoms such as personal, speech, thought, faith, property ownership and justice. The political element reflects an individual's ability to participate in political activity either as an elected official or an elector of the officials. And finally, the social element of citizenship reflects the full spectrum from economic welfare to the ability to share in the social community and live life within the civilized society. Marshall explains that citizenship is defined uniquely by each individual community and that within that community a commonly accepted standard of behavior is created. It is from this standard that each citizen comes to understand responsibilities. Further, this standard can be used to measure an individual's achievement of citizenship within a community (Marshall, 1951). This position resulted from the general study of society and began to focus on the establishment of communities throughout time, particularly, reviewing the universal establishment of civic rights throughout the eighteenth century followed by the growth of political rights in the nineteenth and then social rights in the twentieth (Connell, 2012). Responsibilities as a function of citizenship are predominantly centered on the definition of rights in that responsibilities include the protection of these rights for self and others. Also, responsibilities include loyalty to the community, a contribution to public opinion

and ensuring that the standard for citizenship established by the community does not go

unchallenged (Marshall, 1951).

At the same time, Kymlicka and Norman take this argument further, stating

"citizenship is not just a certain status, defined by a set of rights and responsibilities. It is

also an identity, an expression of one's membership in a political community" (p. 369).

As is evidenced by the arguments of these prominent and influential authors, rights and

responsibilities are equally at the core of the definition of active citizenship. Not to be

confused with the legal debate over what qualifies an individual as a legalized citizen,

debates over active citizenship center on the scope of those rights and responsibilities. In

Ehrlich's (2000) book *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, he defined civic

engagement as "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities" (p.

vi), and he noted that "A morally and civically responsible individual recognizes himself

or herself as a member of a larger social fabric and, therefore, considers social problems

to be at least partly his or her own" (p. xxvi). In this way, active citizenship is always

defined in relation to a community or polity. The community or polity provides the forum

in which citizens are more or less active. And it is our membership in these democratic

communities which provides us with rights as well as responsibilities (Kymlicka &

Norman, 1994). This is the first element in defining active citizenship: an active citizen is

a civil member of the community.

According to Delli Carpini (2004), the second element centers on the gathering of

information and the identification of public problems. Active citizens seek out

information about their community in order to formulate informed opinions about public

issues (Delli Carpini, 2004), and they further must use this information to define problems for themselves and others (Hope, 2005). For example, in Alexandria, VA residents in the Huntington Community have experienced significant loss due to flooding twice in the past ten years – making this one of the highest risk flood zone areas. However, this community has not always been at risk for flooding. Growing residential and commercial development upstream from the neighborhood, in addition to transportation and highway expansion, has caused these more recent flood events. Soon after, community residents gathered together to research the cause of the flooding and engage both county officials and political representatives for assistance. As a result, in 2009 the US Army Corps of Engineers published the *Huntington Flood Damage Reduction Study* that proposed the construction of a levee to protect the community from future flood events.    In the end, through the diligence of these residents, in collaboration with the county, a bond proposal to cover the cost of the levee construction was included on the ballot in 2012. Residents worked to spread the word about the need for the levee, to educate others and garner support for the project. The bond was supported and construction is currently in the early stages for the levee. This is an example where the flooding problem only impacted a small number of residents - approximately 170 households out of the 399,500 households in all of Fairfax County (Fairfax County, 2013). Through the hard and diligent work of active citizens within the neighborhood, Huntington residents will soon be able to live without the fear of an unpredictable and devastating flash flood. Examples of active citizenship are often observed surrounding urban development challenges.

In this way, the most visible defining element of active citizens is participatory behavior within the community (Barber, 1984; Delli Carpini, 2004; Aristotle, 350 BCE; Hope, 2005; Smith, 2010). To be "active," citizens—like the residents of Huntington—individuals must move beyond information gathering and proactively address their own problems and those of the community. This may include involvement in the operation of the government or the delivery of services in order to work towards an improved quality of life. Critical throughout all elements of this definition are both self and others. Both are important and both must be valued by the active citizen. Citizens are not 'active' until relationships and connections are formed with others in the community and, further, until concern for these others exists and their well-being is valued. For example, a resident who requests a building permit for a home renovation project is not an active citizen; however, a resident who petitions the city for additional streetlights to be installed in their neighborhood to increase safety could be considered an active citizen because this petition would benefit themselves and others.

There are endless ways that residents can participate; however, each activity can be classified either 'political' or 'civic'. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, define political engagement as "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (1995, p. 38). A very common example of political participation is voting and it is often considered the most important participatory activity. Political participation can also include volunteering for a candidate or party, trying to persuade someone to vote in a particular way, or lobbying to

affect the making or implementation of public policies by officials. In contrast, civic engagement is defined as "organized voluntary activity focused on problem solving and helping others" (Zukin, 2006, p. 7). Civic participation includes a wide range of activities that may be undertaken either as an individual or with a group. The activities may include things such as acting as an officer or member of a group such as the parent teacher association at a local school, assisting with a bake sale at a religious institution, volunteering to serve food at a local homeless shelter, and even doing favors for neighbors.

A key commonality between civic and political participation is that in either classification, the individual is attempting to attempt to effect change and that this change improves a scenario for others (and sometimes self). More importantly, both civic participation and political participation are behaviors that an active citizen would demonstrate and, further, there is not a requirement that an individual participate both civically and politically in order to be considered active. For example, an active citizen may not necessarily vote in an election, but they may coordinate a neighborhood clean-up event each year, thus this active citizen participates civically, but not politically. This also reveals that active citizenship is a continuum where some individuals could be considered highly active, participating heavily in one or more activities, or individuals may still be considered active citizens, but on a lower end of the continuum. Perhaps an active citizen on the low end of the continuum may only vote in presidential elections, but not participate in any other activities.

Overall, there are many ways in which a resident can be 'active' within the community including both formal and informal means of participating in community life. The example of Huntington Community residents demonstrates an informal, grassroots effort that in the end impacted formal government decisions. Other types of informed participation can include forming citizens groups and volunteering through civil society (e.g., churches and civic groups). In comparison, formal participation is usually directly related to institutions of government, such as voting, going to public meetings, and participating in official citizen advisory boards. It is important to understand that both informal and formal participation are qualities of active citizens and one individual does not need to engage in every type in order to be considered an active citizen. Further, both formal and informal participation methods have the possibility to positively create change to improve the community for both self and others.

**Importance of Active Citizenship.** Governments exist for many reasons including to maintain order, to provide services for the residents, to collectively resolve disputes and, most importantly, to improve quality of life. In order to do this effectively, government officials and representatives need to have a clear understanding of resident needs, desires and problems. Active citizens are not only able to provide this information, but also are able to join together to participate in the identification and resolution of these challenges (Putnam, 1995a). In this participation in the community, active citizenship is the true source of democracy (Barber, 1984). Through active citizenship, the individual is more important than the procedures, and in the end, publics have the knowledge to help themselves and improve quality of life (Smith, 2010). From this perspective, active

citizenship can be more powerful as a means of solving problems than governmental policy or legal coercion (Racine, 1995).

Many researchers and scholars suggest that active citizenship and citizen involvement is a vital component of democratic governance that results in informed management decisions (Callahan, 2007; Cohn-Berman, 2005), transparency and fairness in policy development (Lukensmeyer & Torres, 2006), capacity building (Cuthill & Fein, 2005), and increased trust in government (Keele, 2007). If government officials and citizens work collaboratively to determine and prioritize community needs, then public policies and government actions are likely to reflect the contributions and wishes of the public. Communities with active citizens are better able to rapidly and accurately assess and respond to community needs (Cuthill & Fein, 2005).

For example, The City of Aurora is one of the largest cities within the state of Illinois and is located approximately 45 minutes west of Chicago. In 2000, after hearing media reports that residents felt the government was more focused on new development and downtown revitalization than its older neighborhoods, the Planning Department began the Aurora Neighborhood Planning Initiative (ANPI). The goal of ANPI was to foster active citizenship for neighborhoods throughout the city. The city planners identified large neighborhoods of 3,000-5,000 households, bounded by natural features such as parks and rivers or manmade elements such as major highways, commercial developments and railroads. Residents, business owners, employees and customers all made up the public for these neighborhoods. City planners built up public engagement

within the neighborhood planning processes using a charette[1] process that employed the tenets of nation building and used a dialogic approach. Through this, active citizenship was formed within each neighborhood in order to maintain their neighborhood identity. Both the city and its publics found great value in having built a positive, mutually beneficial relationship; the very purpose of public relations.

One of the first neighborhoods to go through this process was located just outside of the downtown area of the City of Aurora. At the public meetings, the stakeholders were guided through an exercise to determine their common neighborhood image, as Boulding (1961) would call it. The neighborhood selected the name Bardwell Area and identified issues such as parking, safety, rental properties and community involvement. Through the charette process these primary issues were transformed into a common neighborhood identity and a vision for the future. Overall, through ANPI, neighborhood publics were able to clearly state how they wanted to be seen in their Neighborhood Action Plan. This dialogic approach formed strong relationships with those publics and encouraged active citizenship.

In the end, the rewards that came from the formation of these relationships and the building of these neighborhoods were numerous. Through neighborhood building, the city planners were able to create active citizenship in the stakeholders. As active citizens, the stakeholders understood not only their rights, but also their responsibilities. Citizens were able to rely on the relationship and the information that came from it to make

[1] Charettes are intensive, usually multi-day, sessions where all stakeholders are engaged in developing an urban plan or design for some geographic area (for example, a charette might be hosted to develop a plan for a new park or to develop design regulations for a downtown).

informed decisions and protect, or often improve, their situations. Within two years of creating the Action Plan, the Bardwell Area Neighborhood experienced a 20% reduction in crime, which directly addressed neighborhood safety – one of the residents' original issues. As one resident, told the *Chicago Tribune*, "I am actually happier about living in Aurora than I have been in years" (Dardick, 2002, p. 5) and explained that this improved attitude was a direct result of the mutually beneficial relationship.

Finally, city staff were also able to experience dramatic benefits from the building of these neighborhoods, active citizens and the relationship. As redevelopment occurred within the neighborhoods, city planners were able to rely on the communication that resulted from these relationships to guide new growth in a way that the neighborhood public wanted while still applying their technical expertise. It also allowed them to create custom regulations within those neighborhoods to protect historic structures or promote specific types of development. In building a neighborhood identity and active citizenship, the City of Aurora made an extremely beneficial relationship for both government and its publics.

**Active Citizenship Today.** Active citizenship becomes increasingly important when there is a major risk or crisis that impacts or threatens the entire community. The collaboration between active citizens and the government improves the assessment, response and resolution of the problem. For example, a report by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2008) recently identified citizen involvement in emergency management as a key factor in building local community capacity for successfully

responding to disasters. This emphasizes the importance of a significant investment in capacity building at the community level before a disaster occurs (Kapucu, 2007).

Unfortunately, across the United States and even globally, there has been a growing, widespread decline in citizens' interest in participation. This loss is predominantly indicated by the continual decline in voter turnout (Potter, 2002). Further, political scientist Robert Putnam documented a 30-year trend in declining political and civic engagement and the impact of this decline on the quality of our individual and collective personal and public lives (Putnam, 2000). It is known that active citizenship flourishes best in already privileged communities, while both voting and participation in local community organizations are less common in the poor, disadvantaged areas where they are most needed (Skogan, 1988). Although this is a clear problem for all cities, it becomes even more critical in situations when a threat to the city occurs, such as a disaster, urban crisis or even dramatic population decline.

**Shrinking Cities**

Despite the overall continued growth of America's population, many cities are suffering from dramatic population decline. This problem is particularly clear within the central areas of some of the largest cities in the USA, especially in the industrial Northeast and Midwest. Many of these cities have suffered continued decline in the postwar era. For example, according to the US Census Bureau (2012), of the 75 largest U.S. cities that existed in 1940, population growth has only occurred in 28, meaning that in 58.6% of these largest cities have shrunk in population over the past 70 years.

Specifically, a shrinking city is defined as having a declining central city population within a specific geographic boundary (Rieniets, 2009). That said, maintaining a specific geographic boundary to measure population over time can actually be quite difficult. As cities grow and change, annexations can increase the geographic footprint of a city. City-county mergers can also dramatically change a city's boundaries, and, finally, even the Census Bureau's definitions of metropolitan areas have also changed over time (Gamrat & Haulk, 2005; Judd & Swanstrom, 2012).

This volatility becomes particularly interesting when we consider that, in general, people do not want to leave their communities. Communities and cities are viewed by individuals as more than a space within a geographic boundary; they are viewed almost as living things that foster family values, community traditions and a "way of life." Consider the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. As we learned more and more about the severity of the disaster, it seemed certain that thousands of jobs would be lost throughout the entire coastal region due to reduced fishing and shellfish industries as well as significant losses in tourism. Some reports predicted a 25% loss throughout the entire region resulting in a total loss of $22.7 billion (Oxford Economics, 2010). However, the region has survived, industry remains and impacts to tourism was actually quite minor, less than 5% in most areas (Ritchie, Crotts, Zehrer & Volsky, 2013). This demonstrates the deep attachment that individuals have to places and communities, as more than geographic boundaries, and their reluctance to relocate even in the face of hardship. Despite the desires of most residents to remain within their existing communities, urban cities across the United States are indeed shrinking and, in some cases, at an alarming

rate. Urban planning scholars are studying these cities to better hypothesize how the trend can be halted or reversed. But first, to truly understand the issue, we must look at the progression of population decline over time to understand the causes and then review the impact that population loss has had on these cities.

**Historical Causes of Shrinking Cities.** Industrialization in the late 1800s led to rapid surges in population for urban centers all across America. Rural areas and agricultural communities (home to much of the United States population at the time) were abandoned for industrial metropolises and the potential for economic success that they offered. For instance, Chicago, one of the fastest growing cities, grew from a mere four thousand persons to over one million in just 50 years, from 1840-1890. But just 30 years later, beginning in the 1920s, this trend began to reverse, in part because the rapid growth of overcrowded, dirty and disorderly cities led to poor hygiene and deteriorated social conditions (Reinets, 2009).

More generally, Judd and Swanstrom (2012) have identified four great trends that occurred over the course of the 20th Century and together, fuel the mass migration to the suburbs. These included the rise of middle-class prosperity, transportation innovations, a desire for a larger housing and a higher standard of living; resulting in, simply put, a rejection of the city. When the innovation and mass development of railroads began to radiate out from the densely packed urban core the population slowly began to radiate with it. In this way, the first big wave of suburban development came with the streetcars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the middle-class became more

prosperous, indicated by the adoption of the automobile and the building of paved roads in the 1920s, this made the move to the suburbs even easier.

Suburbanization accelerated rapidly; however, after World War II. The Second World War, on the heels of the Great Depression, brought about limited supplies and harsh rations. At the end of the war, renewed economic prosperity thus connected with an intense pent-up demand for improved housing and consumer goods. As a result, moving to a new single family home in a neighborhood full of families became extremely popular and families of all social classes began to desert the cities for good. In this way, if in earlier decades, suburban development had been mainly an upper- and middle-class phenomenon, now it filtered down to embrace working-class families, too (Judd & Swanstrom, 2012).

Suburbanization of urban centers and migration within the United States often created significant racial inequalities within cities. Scholars speak of these two major population changes as "twin migrations" (J&S, 2012. P. 148). With regard to suburbanization, the 1970 census revealed that, for the first time, more Americans lived in suburbs than in either rural areas or the central cities - and the suburbs continued to grow every decade and have not stopped. The twentieth-century movement of millions of white families from the central cities to the suburbs, constitutes one of the "great population migrations in American history" (Tabb & Sawers, 1978). In contrast to this "white flight," there were several successive waves of rural-to-urban migration into cities, predominantly from 1920 to 1960. In this period, blacks left the South for the industrial cities of the North and Mexican immigrants relocated to cities of the Southwest

(J&S). Measured in social and political turmoil, the postwar migration of 5 million

African Americans out of the South was clearly the most traumatic (Lemann & Brian

Lamb Booknotes Collection, 1991).

The scale of the dislocations could be compared with devastation from natural

disasters and the results lasted equally as long. Many neighborhoods never recovered; for

others, it would take decades, if it happened at all. In 2005 Detroit was a city in which 11

percent of the population was white and 82 percent was African American. The contrast

with Detroit's suburbs was stark: there, African Americans comprised less than 10

percent of the population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2014).

These two mass migrations resulted in a dramatically changed demography for

urban centers across the United States by the mid-1960s . This change was often referred

to as "the urban crisis" (Judd & Swanstrom, 2012, p. 138) to identify the extreme

geographic segregation of whites who now filled the suburbs from blacks who

concentrated at urban centers. The urban crisis resulted in several common stereotypes

that impacted the image and perception of cities versus suburbs including common

references the 'black ghetto' in contrast to the 'American Dream' indicating that racial

segregation was prevalent in both the South and the North and would be a powerful issue

in both politics and culture at all levels. "Americans became accustomed to thinking in

dichotomies—city/suburban, black–white, ghetto–subdivision, poor–affluent—and these

habits of thought consistently cast cities in a dismal light" (Beauregard, 2003). Along

with this, the suburbs were associated with tranquility and bright green lawns and white

picket fences while images of race, poverty, crime and slums were used to symbolize the

inner cities. Stories of murder, mayhem, and drugs in urban neighborhoods became a means by which local news stations could shore up their ratings by the 1970s and for white Americans, crime became the symbol for the inner city and its residents (Judd, 1994).

At the same time, this suburban movement accelerated at the very moment when industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest began to lose their economic vitality, due first to competition from suburban jurisdictions (as factories and jobs moved to the suburban fringe) and then, eventually to the American Sunbelt and low-wage regions of the world economy  (Judd & Swanstrom, 2012). All through the industrial belt stretching from New England through the Great Lakes, states were hemorrhaging population. Between 1950 and 1960 Boston's population shrunk by 13 percent; by comparison, the population losses were 12.5 percent in St. Louis and 14 percent in Cleveland.

From there, things only got worse; for example St. Louis lost approximately 20 percent of its population <u>each year</u> from 1960 through 2000, starting with a population of 857,000 people in 1950 and having only 335,000 left at the end of the century. Other cities also slipped into decline. In the 40 years from 1950 to 1990, virtually all of the old industrial cities bled population. And for several cities, the trend has continued into the new millennium.

This population loss has taken place against the backdrop of dramatic economic restructuring. In the Northeast and Midwest in particular, rapid deindustrialization threatened the existence of entire communities. For instance, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, region experienced a 44 percent loss in manufacturing jobs from 1979 to

1988, three-quarters of them related to steel. Unemployment levels reached as high as 20 percent, not only in Pittsburgh, but in Detroit and several other cities of the industrial belt. Some people fled for more prosperous areas of the Sunbelt, but a great many of them elected to stay.

In short, rather than giving up, in city after city public leaders waged campaigns to revitalize their economies, and in most places the cause of local renewal took on features of a permanent crusade. Again, if given the opportunity, people will resist leaving and will instead put their efforts into reviving their local economies and strengthening their communities. They would prefer to hold onto the traditions and cultures that help bring meaning to their lives. For this reason, city leaders should do everything they can to not only promote local prosperity but also to involve citizens in the process of rebuilding.

To be sure, in the last fifteen years, the prospects for some central cities have improved. Fifteen large older industrial cities—including, for example, St. Louis, Gary, Baltimore, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Detroit—have seen their rates of population decline slow somewhat. And a few large cities like Washington, DC have added residents in the last ten years. For this reason, the current urban landscape in the United States is a product of uneven development. Some cities (e.g., Portland and Seattle) are growing across the board while in others (e.g., Baltimore), there are pockets of gentrification in the midst of overall decline, and in still others (e.g., Detroit), there remains a full-blown crisis of economic decline and out-migration.

**Challenges of Shrinking Cities.** The challenges faced by shrinking cities are profound. In particular, a declining population brings about new, unique threats to a city's economic and cultural vitality. The dramatic challenges of population decline and increased presence of vacant and abandoned properties are overwhelming and each element compounds the other. Shrinking cities are predominantly older industrial cities (Vey, 2007) with significant and sustained population loss (most have 25% or greater over the past 40 years) and increasing levels of vacant and abandoned properties, creating blighted residential, commercial, and industrial buildings.

The rates of property vacancy and abandonment in former industrial cities are particularly stark. The 65 older industrial cities identified in the Brookings Institution's Restoring Prosperity report (Vey, 2007) have higher residential vacancy rates (9.4% or more) than their 237 peers (6.7%). More alarmingly, these cities have nearly twice the rate of other vacant units as compared to their peers (28.4% vs. 15.7%). In 2000, the City of Baltimore estimated it had 12,700 abandoned housing units, while the Census count was 42,480. Philadelphia estimated it had 26,000 vacant housing units and 31,000 vacant lots. For its part, Detroit owned about 36,000 parcels of tax reverted land in 2004 (Dewar, 2006).

As both a "symptom and a disease" (Burchell & Listokin, 1981, p. 15), property abandonment challenges cities across the United States by influencing crime and the vitality of residential and commercial areas (Accordino & Johnson, 2000). Vacant and abandoned properties also pose fiscal challenges of property maintenance and management while a dwindling tax base caused by the loss of residents and businesses

makes it extremely difficult to address the increasing social and service needs of the remaining population (Glaeser & Gyourko, 2005; National Vacant Properties Campaign, 2005). This then becomes a downward spiral as cities without these services are less attractive to new residents. Shrinking cities are thus more likely to suffer from abandoned streets, boarded windows, and old, deteriorated infrastructures and, consequently, from ambient feelings of fear among inhabitants and negative perceptions from other city residents. Thus, urban shrinkage can trigger a downward spiral in which population loss, the decay of urban space, decreasing tax revenues, falling real-estate prices and negative city image go hand in hand (Rieniets, 2009).

   **Communication and the Problem of Shrinking Cities.** If we can recognize the consequences of population loss and economic decline, what can be done to address these consequences? Smart urban planning is only one part of the solution. Rebuilding a shrinking city also will require the efforts of communication professionals, who can address the negative images and perceptions associated with shrinking cities—images which recursively encourage more residents to vacate these cities, thus accelerating the damage (Pallagast & Wiechmann, 2005).

   In particular, public relations professionals have a constructive role to play. For as we have seen, although the challenges are profound, the active citizenship literature indicates that collaboration between government and residents could be a positive step toward addressing the negative consequences of population loss and vacant properties within these cities. For this reason, perhaps the responsibility of combating the negative public image associated with shrinking cities requires a joint effort from both planners

(who can address the built environment) and public relations professionals (who can build better relationships with resident publics and help to rebuild the city's image).

Too often, however, when city leaders think of "communication" in this context, they do so through the narrow lens of advertising and "place branding," and indeed much of the place branding literature centers on applying the tenets of corporate branding to cities and places. However, new research recognizes that successful place branding requires the involvement of multiple publics including investors, visitors, and especially residents (Ashworth & Kavaratis, 2009; Hankinson, 2001) and uncovering a common vision between all of these stakeholders (Virgo & de Chernatony, 2006). In this way, if city leaders are interested in involving citizens in the process of urban revitalization, and if they want citizens to engage in efforts to rebuild the city's image or "brand," they need to build better relationships with citizens. And within communication theory, dialogic theory provides a platform for beginning this discussion.

Dialogic theory centers on the importance of a *relationship* between a communicator and relevant publics that is based on trust, satisfaction and sympathy (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The relationship is formed through frequent and honest two-way communication. Dialogic theory provides a framework for public participation and because of this is central to effective government-publics relationships (Taylor & Kent, 2006). The relationship formed meets the needs of a variety of publics rather than only those in power which is critically important during the creation of a common vision and a more effective place branding strategy.

**Approaches to Public Relations**

The desire to cultivate active citizenship has been studied at length within many levels of government. Most of this literature engages with, at least initially, social capital theory which emphasizes the importance of relationships within a community in order to advance civic and political participation. Models based on social capital theory begin with a foundation in interpersonal trust which brings about social cohesiveness (Putnam, 2000, 1993, 1995a, 1995b). Social cohesiveness leads to social capital that is needed in order for a community to come together and solve problems (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2004; Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Kwak, Shah & Holbert, 2004). From the perspective of city governments, particularly within shrinking cities, establishing something similar to interpersonal trust with residents is the first step. Within communication studies, public relations theory provides one avenue to understanding and addressing this process of relationship building.

**Public Relations and Relationship Management.** Relationship management is a core functional element of public relations. In this, communication must center on common interests and shared goals in order to lead to a mutually beneficial relationship (Ledingham, 2003). Despite the vast amount of literature that discusses the importance of relationship building, little research actually attempts to define the concept itself. Many scholars thus seem to assume that there is a universal understanding of the term "relationship" in a public relations context. Moreover, the literature also reveals that there are many debates over how to best measure the strength or "goodness" of these relationships and what elements to consider including timeframe, influence, trust,

transparency, satisfaction, and commitment in addition to the publics' perceptions, expectations, measurable objectives, message design, tactics and evaluation (Plowman, 2013; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Bruning, Castle & Schrepfer, 2004).

In my view, defining the concept of "relationship" in a public relations context requires looking at the smallest level of a relationship—interpersonal or dyadic relationships—and adapting insights from the interpersonal literature to the organization-public level (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2000) with consideration for the type of relationship such as familial, friend, professional, etc. In doing this, the most important elements of the relationship—in short, those that should be measured or explored—are trust, reciprocity, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and mutual understanding (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992).

In this way, drawing on what we know about strong interpersonal relationships, and similar to the tenets of social capital theory, the definition of "good relationship management" for organization-public relationship (or government-citizen relationships in this context) has four dimensions; the first of which is trust. Open communication will bolster residents' understanding that there is integrity, dependability and competence in government operations and will foster trust. Second, a strong organization-public relationship between government and citizens must have control mutuality, meaning that the parties must agree as to who has the power in various situations in order to avoid power struggles (Grunig, 1993). If these exist, a long-term commitment is a third crucial dimension. In short, both the government and the citizens must remain committed to the belief that the relationship is worth maintaining. Finally, and perhaps most importantly,

both parties must be *satisfied* that the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs (Zhang & Seltzer, 2006). Each of these four dimensions—trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction—are challenging for both parties, especially considering that the government is the responsible party for facilitating and growing this relationship and active citizens. Because of these challenges, much research has been conducted on the lifecycle of organization-public relationships.

Models of the lifecycle organization-public relationships have investigated the various relationship states and identified antecedents, outcomes and maintenance strategies (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig & Huang, 2000). Antecedents to the relationship include the perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997), behavioral and situational factors linking publics to organizations (Grunig & Huang, 2000), communication behaviors and experience (Yang, 2007), and internal communication and organizational structure (Kim, 2007). With regard to the challenges facing city governments in shrinking cities the idea of perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors can be particularly important when considering that the negative image of decline compounds the physical damage resulting from population loss and vacancy. This negative image and the slow process of restoring the built environment could create a perception that the government is not actively working to restore the community overall or does not have an interest in having a relationship or partnership with residents. Research on outcomes of the relationship have successfully identified goal achievement and changes in perceptions of relationship state (Grunig & Huang, 2000), attitude formation and behavioral intention (Ki & Hon, 2007), loyalty to the organization

(Ledingham & Bruning, 2000), overall satisfaction with the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000b), and improved organizational reputation (Yang, 2007). Maintenance strategies focus on managing and growing the relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000).

The role of strategic communication in models of organization-public relationships is most relevant at the maintenance strategy stage. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000) noted that "it is difficult to overstate the importance of the communication linkage in organization-public relationships" (p. 16). Communication programs that are strategically planned and implemented facilitate interaction between the organization and its stakeholders and are critical to the process of establishing and maintaining a relationship (Ledingham, 2006). In this state, outgoing communication is used to both influence and understand the public and research in this area has indicated the critical importance of two-way symmetrical communication (Ledingham, 2003).

Two-way symmetrical communication allows the public the necessary opportunity to provide feedback and reciprocate the relationship. This dialogue guides how the organization needs to change in order to meet the needs of the public – a highly beneficial outcome (Huang, 2004). Strategic two-way symmetrical communication is more clearly discussed and evaluated by dialogic theory (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

**Defining Dialogic Theory.** The concept of dialogue was first presented by theologian Martin Buber (1970, 1985) whose work focused on seeing each other as equals, not as objects. And he further used the concept of dialogue to argue that conversation between individuals *is* the goal and not a simple means to achieving a goal.

Johannesen (1990) identified five essential defining characteristics of dialogue: genuine, accurate empathetic understanding; unconditional positive regard; presentness; spirit of mutual equality; and a supportive psychological climate.

Advancing the definition from foundations deeply rooted in theology, psychology and philosophy, Kent and Taylor (2002) offered their own definition of dialogue, particularly within the context of public relations. Their writings conceptualize dialogue in terms of "two-way symmetrical" communication. In their view, engaging in dialogic communication, particularly through public relations, means that the publics are made equal with the original communicator (Botan, 1993), relating back to Martin Buber's arguments.

Kent and Taylor's (2002) definition of dialogue and further, dialogic theory, have been widely accepted by communication scholars and used to advance communication research. There are five overarching tenets of dialogism: mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk and commitment – a list very similar to the four dimensions of organization-public relationships: trust, control mutuality, open communication and satisfaction (Zhang & Seltzer, 2010). Mutuality is focused on the relationship between organizations and publics. They are tied together and they each need the other to exist. Propinquity addresses frequent, spontaneous and genuine interaction with publics. The organization must understand that publics are necessary to make decisions, before the decisions are made. Within these frequent communications, the organization must foster an environment of trust and support defining empathy. The organization must value the publics opinion and work to view things from their perspective.

The fourth tenet, risk, is especially important. In this context, the concept identifies that organizations indeed take some risks in valuing the public's opinion so highly, mostly because there is a possibility that the publics will disagree with the organization's original intent. The risk is that the organization must relinquish some power to their publics; however, the reward of this posture has the potential to be significantly greater than the risk (Kent & Taylor, 2002). This is related to the fourth dimension of organization-public relationships, satisfaction, where both the organization and publics must perceive the benefits of the relationship to be greater than the costs (Zhang & Seltzer, 2010).

In short, city planners who engage in a dialogue with city publics must be prepared for moments when citizens object to their plans. And sometimes the publics are right to do so. One example of the importance and potential benefits of risk is the tumultuous situation surrounding the construction of the Spadina expressway in Toronto. City planners had developed an extensive transportation plan that included the construction of several expressways that lead from the rapidly growing suburban areas into the central city. Although the plan was developed in the early 1940s, construction did not begin until the mid-1960s and by this time, the demographics of the urban areas of Toronto had changed. Residents of the urban neighborhoods that would be directly impacted by the development of the expressway, many of whom would lose their homes to make way for the new road, now disagreed with the construction plan and were not willing to simply accept the expertise of the 1940s planners (Nowlan & Nowlan, 1970).

As dissatisfaction grew, residents banded together to form activist groups, such as

the Stop Spadina Save Our City Co-Ordinating Committee (SSSOCCC) which included university faculty, students and residents from the local area. Opposition groups based their case on the factors of noise, pollution, destruction of homes and the expected increase of traffic the roadway would cause (Sewell, 1993). In 1969, after construction on a portion of the Spadina Expressway was already underway, three new members were elected to the Toronto City Council who were affiliated with grassroots efforts to stop Spadina.

In 1971, following a city review of the expressway plan, construction stopped and the project was cancelled thus saving the old neighborhoods in central Toronto. One elected official remarked on the change, "If we are building a transportation system to serve the automobile, the Spadina Expressway would be a good place to start. But if we are building a transportation system to serve people, the Spadina Expressway is a good place to stop" (Rose, 1972). Today, the neighborhoods that were spared from dissection by the expressway have become vibrant communities and destinations that are frequented by more than those who live in them. If the turn of events had not caused the City of Toronto government to take a risk and consider the valuable relationship with publics and the neighborhood residents, then Toronto today would be a city divided by many expressways. However, as a result of the risk and the relationship, many of these expressways were cancelled or converted to subway plans, all of which has helped Toronto to become a city celebrated for its neighborhoods (Sewell, 1993).

The final tenet of dialogic communication is commitment, where the organization must remain dedicated to dialogue and to achieving understanding with publics. In this,

the focus must remain on the mutual benefits of the dialogue and not on winning or manipulating the other party. This is best achieved when both parties remain committed to interpretation and understanding (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Dialogic theory represents "a theoretical shift—from public relations reflecting an emphasis on managing communication to an emphasis on communication as a tool for negotiating relationships" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 23) At the core of public relations is the relationship itself and the primary objective of public relations practitioners is to develop and sustain relationships. This is done by managing expectations through frequent, honest communication and interaction in order to achieve mutual understanding, trust and respect. The tenets of relationships with publics can be modeled after the tenets of interpersonal communication, according to Pearson (as cited in Botan & Taylor, 2004). Just as in interpersonal situations, strong relationships result from continuous learning and growth as well as an openness to change. Knowing this, the ideal relationship with regard to public relations can be defined as a mutually beneficial connection between the organization and its publics that is cultivated by the practitioner. Best practices within public relations indicate that a dialogic approach is necessary for achieving excellence, according to excellence theory (Grunig & Repper, 1992).

**Dialogic Theory in Urban Communication.** There are three levels in which dialogue can be incorporated into organizational public relations: interpersonal (from leadership and individuals who interact with publics), mediated (often through technology) and organizational (evident through the strategic communication and grand strategy of the organization) (Kent & Taylor, 2002). From an organization's perspective,

it is important to incorporate the tenets of dialogic theory within a grand strategy (White, 2008). Through strategic dialogic communication, organizations are able to build healthier relationships with publics, which in turn leads to positive relationship outcomes. It has been demonstrated that dialogic communication is a significant predictor of both civic and political participation when looking at the relationship between publics and a political party through the media (Zhang & Seltzer, 2010). Considered within the context of the current study, these positive outcomes of dialogic public relations should include increased active citizenship in urban governance.

Dialogic communication needs to be focused on the nature and direction of the communication, not just on the frequency of communication, in order to have the positive outcomes identified in studies of relationship management of organization-public relationships (Zhang & Seltzer, 2010). Unfortunately, more often than not, established bureaucratic processes such as the government boards and review committees coupled with extensive paperwork required by law for urban development are too rigid to accommodate new approaches for citizen engagement (Timney, 1998). This means that the role of public relations professionals to engage citizens is increasingly important.

The barriers to building strong relationships between government and citizens can in this way be formidable. In some cases, for example, government actors can simply be overwhelmed by citizen demands for results or an improved quality of life and may feel they cannot—or should not—be held accountable for all of them (D'Agostino & Kloby, 2011). Pressed by constant demands on their time, elected officials and public administrators also often rely on traditional participation mechanisms, such as public

meetings, as the primary means to listen to and engage with the public (Adams, 2004). At the same time, these encounters fall far short of the ideals of citizen involvement, as they are often sparsely attended due to citizens' work schedules, lack of interest, child care needs, or fear of public speaking (Adams, 2004; Berner, 2001; King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998).

Still, however formidable the barriers, research clearly shows that the city-resident relationship is a key factor in resident satisfaction and it can be used to positively influence resident attitudes and intended behaviors. Research has demonstrated that there is a direct link between the communication behaviors of the city (in that they were focused on fostering the relationship versus managing the message) and the attitudes of the residents (Bruning, Langenhop & Green, 2004). Further, research has shown that when organization–public relationships were managed effectively as identified through dialogic theory, practitioner action can be linked to outcomes such as positive relationship building with key publics (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Hutton, 1999; Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Kovacs, 2001; Ledingham, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001), enhanced reputation (Bridges & Nelson, 2000; Grunig, 2001; Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001), enhanced citizen satisfaction (Bruning & Hatfield, 2002; Bruning & Ledingham, 1998, 2000a,b), behavioral intent (Bruning, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000a; Bruning & Ralston, 2000, 2001; Ledingham, 2001a; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000), and actual behavior (Bruning, 2002; Bruning & Lambe, 2009).

Cutting across these studies is a common theme. At the core of a dialogic approach to organization- public communication are these commitments: "listening,

empathy, being able to contextualize issues within local, national, and international frameworks, being able to identify common ground between parties, thinking about long-term rather than short-term objectives, seeking out groups/individuals with opposing viewpoints, and soliciting a variety of internal and external opinions on policy issues." (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 31)

Finally, dialogic communication has been studied in many different organizations such as nonprofit activist organizations (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Reber & Kim, 2006; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001), Fortune 500 companies (Esrock & Leichty, 1999, 2000; Park & Reber, 2008), colleges and universities (Kang & Norton, 2006; McAllister-Spooner, 2008), as well as congressional Web sites (Taylor & Kent, 2004). However, the barriers to, and potential benefits of, a dialogic approach to organization-public communication has not been specifically investigated in the context of shrinking cities, city governments, and their resident publics.

**Research Questions**

In short, the review of previous theory and research has revealed that little research has thus far been conducted on public relations in shrinking cities, including especially on how they have addressed the challenge of building active citizens around issues of urban development, urban growth, and redressing negative city images or perceptions. There is research on the topics of urban communication (Matsaganis, 2013), communication and urban planning (Gandelsonas & Great Britain. Dept. for International Development, 2002), communication towards partnerships (Riley & Wakely, 2005), city imaging or place branding (Vale, 1995), and communication for declining historic

districts (Simpson, 1995) but there is not research that specifically addresses these topics within 'shrinking cities.' To this end, I designed the current study to investigate the following research questions. These questions informed a qualitative, exploratory research study, the purpose of which was to better understand the relationships between the everyday economic and social constraints under which public relations professionals operate and their broader goals of developing strong, dialogical relationships with their publics.

RQ1: How are professionals in shrinking cities working to build relationships and foster active citizen engagement around the goal of urban development and growth? To what extent can these practices be described as "dialogical"?

RQ2: What challenges do these professionals face in building these relationships and foster active citizenship engagement? What strategies do they use to overcome these challenges?

# Chapter Two. Methods

## Selecting the Case Cities  -- Shrinking Cities and Active Citizenship

In this research, there are three factors that must be defined and assessed: shrinking cities, active citizenship and dialogic communication. First, in order to select appropriate case cities for this study I needed to identify a list of shrinking cities. From there, I determined which of these shrinking cities enjoyed active citizen participation in governance by drawing on existing survey data.  This process enabled me to select four case cities (two with higher active citizenship ratings and two with lower active citizenship ratings).

Historically, the urban studies literature has identified central city population loss as the primary indicator of a shrinking city (Rieniets, 2009). The U.S. Census Bureau provides the most logical source for this data; however, over time, census district boundaries have changed. This makes identifying shrinking cities much more challenging, as the definition of shrinking cities also indicates that the central city population loss must occur over time and within the same geography (Rieneits, 2009). For this reason, rather than analyzing population counts over time, the housing vacancy rate offers a useful indicator of population loss. This is because the housing stock in a city changes less than the migration of people – homes rarely move from place to place. By identifying the number of vacant homes within a city, the challenge of changing

geographic boundaries is no longer part of the assessment. The number of vacant homes becomes an indicator of the level of population loss. Overall, the 2010 vacancy rates, as produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, were analyzed for 51 major United States cities.

Next, in order to measure "active citizenship," I reviewed a list of cities analyzed by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Each year, CNCS collects information related to volunteerism and civic life in the major cities. This information was used to create a ranked list of the same 51 cities, with the top-ranked city having the most active citizenship and the city with the rank of 51 having the least active citizenship. The CNCS data elements used to determine the "active citizenship" ranking of these cities included: volunteer rate (from 2004-2011); the extent to which citizens discuss politics with family/friends; the extent to which citizens express political or community opinions via the internet; citizen non-electoral participation (have they contacted or visited public official, become involved in a civic group involvement, or acted as an officer or member of committee for group or organization?); and the extent to which citizens talk with and do favors for their neighbors (CNCS, 2011).

In looking at the results of this analysis, a general trend can be observed that cities with a high vacancy rate often have low active citizenship rankings. This suggests that shrinking cities—which face numerous social and economic challenges as it is—also must address these problems without the benefit of a fully engaged citizenry. For instance, San Jose, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle and Virginia Beach have the lowest vacancy rates among the 51 subject cities. Of these, all but Los Angeles have high levels of active citizenship. New Orleans, Detroit, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Atlanta have the

highest vacancy rates. With the exception of New Orleans, these have some of the lowest

ranks for active citizenship. Because of the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina,

New Orleans may not be representative of other shrinking cities (given the unique

natural-disaster related circumstances the city has faced). Of particular interest, St. Louis,

Rochester and Pittsburgh have high vacancy rates, but also high levels for active

citizenship.

**Selecting Case Cities – A Pilot Study on Dialogic Communication**

At this point, I had six potential case cities to investigate. All six had high

vacancy rates, but three of the six scored high for active citizenship as well. To reduce

this list to four case cities (two with low active citizenship, two with high active

citizenship), I conducted a pilot study reviewing their city websites for their level of

dialogic communication. To this end, the research questions for this pilot study were: Are

Shrinking Cities communicating dialogically with resident publics (both active citizens

and potential active citizens) via government websites? Based on the content of these

websites, is there any evidence that combating the negative perception of a shrinking city

has been incorporated into the communication strategy? Based on the content of these

websites, is there any evidence that encouraging active citizenship has been incorporated

into the communication strategy?

Overall, studies suggest that websites, blogs, and social networking sites facilitate

greater dialogic communication (e.g., Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook,

2007; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). There are five principles

for communicating dialogically on the World Wide Web: useful information, ease of

interface, conservation of visitors (time), generation of return visits (creates a lasting relationship), and a dialogic feedback loop (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003).

As noted above, these factors were used to evaluate the websites of the six potential cities in order to explore how, if at all, cities are communicating dialogically with residents via websites in order to find any evidence, that these cities were encouraging active citizenship and also to determine which final four cities would be selected for further study. In this pilot study, only the homepage and pages accessible within one click were evaluated because city websites can be extremely large and the dialogic elements emphasize ease of use for the visitor. The following websites were used for this analysis: City of Detroit, Michigan (https://www.detroitmi.gov/), City of Cincinnati, Ohio (http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cityofcincinnati/), City of Cleveland, Ohio (http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us/CityofCleveland/Home), City of St. Louis, Missouri (https://stlouis-mo.gov/), City of Rochester, New York (http://www.cityofrochester.gov/index.aspx?id=96), and City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (http://pittsburghpa.gov/).

While there were some commonalities between all of the cities' websites such as the presence of a search box and major links to the rest of the site on the main page, there were very few similarities that could be identified with regard to how these cities address active citizenship and their challenges as a shrinking city on their websites, or even in the extent to which the websites offered a dialogic interface according to the principles outlined by Kent, Taylor and White (2003).  Initially this appears to be a negative, but because this pilot study was used to identify the best cities for the current research, this is

actually a positive. This preliminary finding indicates that there is much to learn from

more in depth analysis. Table 1 includes a summary of the findings from each of the

websites and the other data collected.

Table 1.   Analysis Summary.

| Measures | Detroit | Cincinnati | Cleveland | St. Louis | Rochester | Pittsburgh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statistical Data | | | | | | |
| Vacancy Rate | 26% | 21% | 21% | 20% | 17% | 16% |
| Active Citizenship Rank (out of 51) | 49 | 35 | 43 | 4 | 12 | 14 |
| 2012 Population | 701,475 | 296,550 | 390,928 | 318,172 | 210,532 | 306,211 |
| Strategic Communication | | | | | | |
| Address Shrinking City | ✓ | | | | | |
| Address Active Citizenship | | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Dialogic Communication | | | | | | |
| 1. Ease of Interface | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆◆ |
| 2. Usefulness to Visitor | ◆◆ | ◆ | ◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆ | ◆◆ |
| 3. Conservation of Visitors | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆ | ◆◆ | ◆◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆ |
| 4. Return Visit Encouraged | ◆ | ◆ | ◆ | ◆◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆ |
| 5. Dialogic Loop | ◆ | ◆ | ◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆◆ | ◆◆ |

◆◆◆ HIGH  ◆◆ MED  ◆ LOW

Each of the five principles for communicating dialogically on the internet has

three to nine criteria that can be used for assessing a website. Each of the six city

websites were evaluated against these criteria. For example, the presence of a calendar of

events is a criterion for principle four, return visit encouragement, while links to political

leaders is a criterion for principle two, usefulness to visitor. If the criterion was present

on a site, it was checked yes on a tracking table. At the end of the assessment, the number

of yes marks were calculated to determine the percentage of criterion that were met for

each principle. Principles for each city with 66% or more criterion met were marked high

and principles for cities with 33% or less criterion met were marked low. All others were

marked medium, with regard to Table 1. The complete assessment of each site is

available in Appendix 1. Further, each site was assessed to determine if the web-based

content addressed either shrinking city challenges or active citizenship. This was a simple

assessment looking any content that addresses either of these two issues; examples of the

findings related to these items are addressed in the summary sections by each city.

Generally, Table 1 shows that the three cities with poor active citizenship ranks

(as measured by CNCS indicators) also tended to have less dialogic government websites

(see Detroit, Cincinnati, and Cleveland above). Despite the fact that the sites navigate

fairly easily and provide comprehensive information, all three fall short in measures of

return visit encouragement and dialogic loop. In contrast, the three shrinking cities with

more positive active citizenship rankings (St. Louis, Rochester, and Pittsburgh)

demonstrate easily navigable websites with comprehensive information and also

encourage dialogue via web-tools and invitations to participate in civic or community

life. Interestingly, although all six communities were classified as shrinking cities (with

high vacancy rates), only one specifically addressed the problem of population decline

and the goal of igniting redevelopment within the strategic communication messages on

the page. Appendix 2 presents a summary of the user experience for each site, what was

found and how that relates to each of the five principles as well as to shrinking cities and

active citizenship. I offer this analysis in the appendix because understanding the sites as an indicator of the city's communication strategy and the presence of dialogic communication is important to understanding how the selection of the final four cities was made.

  **The Final Four: City Selection.** The evaluation of the websites of six shrinking cities identified several interesting attributes and strategic communication messages that should be evaluated further. Considering the comparison of critical elements to this study, shrinking cities, active citizenship and dialogic theory, a selection of four cities allowed for variety and commonalities to be identified within this research. Detroit was included because of the city's unique posture to address the population and economic decline as a part of the communication strategy (as represented on its website. For more details, see Appendix 1). Cleveland, like Detroit, is also a shrinking city with low active citizenship; however, challenges of being shrinking city are not apparent in their communication strategy (at least was represented by their website). In contrast, both St. Louis and Rochester went to great lengths to encourage attitudes and behaviors related to active citizenship (again, at least as could be inferred from their website). A final selection of Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis and Rochester thus provided an opportunity to investigate shrinking cities, active citizenship, dialogic theory and the relationship between these three important elements.

**Primary Study: Interviews with Officials from Four Shrinking Cities**

  In order to investigate how city officials were cultivating citizen engagement in addressing the challenges facing their shrinking city, government representatives from

the selected four cities (Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Rochester) were interviewed via phone. In order to gather a comprehensive perspective from the city government, public relations professionals, urban planners and representatives of the city leadership (Mayor's office) were purposefully recruited.

   **Interview Recruitment.** The research truly began the moment each city was first contacted for interviews. To find potential participants, each city was first contacted via an email address found on the website or web contact form. Every attempt was made to send the initial request directly to a communication professional at the city. This method was only effective for the City of Rochester, NY where the city website provided contact information directly for the Communication Director, who replied within minutes and personally helped to make connections with employees for the interviews. At St. Louis, after a few attempts to use the website comment form (no email addresses were provided on the site) a phone call to the Customer Service main phone line provided a connection to the Mayor's Office which led to the interviews. The website for the City of Cleveland provided a phone number for the main line at the communication division who assisted in setting up the interviews with individuals. The City of Detroit was unresponsive to phone and email attempts for weeks; however, through some connections at the Detroit Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America contact was made with an individual in the communication division who then assisted in finding other individuals for interviews. While this was likely a unique request, it may in some ways represent the methods that a resident must take to contact a city and the helpfulness of the responses.

Each of the cities were encouraged to provide names of individuals that they felt would have good insight into urban planning challenges and communication with residents. In the end, employees from a variety of departments were interviewed including: Public Safety & Emergency Management, Public Utilities, Communications & Creative Services, Publicity, Department of Neighborhoods, New Media Communications Bureau, City Engineer, Economic Development, Citizens' Service Bureau, and three city Mayor's Offices.

The interview questions explored issues related to active citizenship and the challenges of responding to population loss and urban decline. Questions also focused on the city governments' strategic responses to each of these issues. In particular, the interviews sought to identify the communication tactics, goals, challenges and attitudes of these professionals, as representatives of the city government. A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix 3.

**Interview Data Analysis.** Following the pilot study of the city websites, three professionals were interviewed from each of the selected four cities using the standard interview questions to guide the discussion with follow-on questions specific to the material that the individual presented. Each in-depth interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed resulting in 137 pages of transcription for analysis. These transcripts were then used for qualitative analysis and coding to identify common themes related to active citizenship, shrinking cities and communication with residents.

More specifically, the interview transcripts were initially scanned, organized and categorized using an "open coding" process adapted from the grounded theory work of Strauss and Corbin (1998). In this initial stage of the analysis, each comment that appeared in the interview was examined, looking for one of the following: a remark that was expressed particularly passionately by the speaker, a remark that resonated particularly well with subject of this research, a comment that seemed to mirror or contradict that of another interviewee, a comment that was uniquely interesting or unexpected or feedback that related specifically to shrinking cities, active citizenship or dialogic communication practices.

During the analysis, a label or code was attached to each comment that seemed to describe the meaning of that particular statement. For example a professional from the City of Detroit spoke of corporations and foundations that have stepped up within the community to help carry messages from the city to resident members and vice versa. This comment was coded 'partners'. As another example, a professional from the City of Cleveland explained how they have many opportunities to engage residents through public meetings where they can have face-to-face conversations. This comment was coded 'dialog' and also, 'platforms and methods'.

The end result of this analysis was a list of codes including: active citizenship examples, shrinking city challenges, dialogue, communication divide, engaging citizens, future, key message, negative response, new media benefits, new media use, partners, platforms and methods, strong quote, and slow to change. This initial analysis helped to provide a general sense of the conversations and identify some key areas or themes

resulting from the interviews. These themes, building out of this inductive process of coding and category-building, are reported in the next chapter.

Drawing on the particular interest to look at how the professionals' communication with residents could be or not be considered dialogical, a second round of coding was done for all 12 of the interviews. This round specifically analyzed the conversation from each interview and aligned responses with the five tenets for dialogism presented by Kent and Taylor (2002) mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk and commitment. Through these interviews, the goal is to better understand how city officials are working to build relationships with residents and foster active citizenship. A further goal was to determine how, if at all, the communication between city officials and residents can be considered dialogical. And finally, to understand the challenges that may occur in building these relationships and what, if anything, is being done to overcome these challenges.

# Chapter Three. Results

This chapter presents an analysis of interviews with city officials in four cities: Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis and Rochester. First reviewed are the communication methods that professionals in these shrinking cities use to encourage active citizenship. These communication methods are grouped as traditional communication, new media, direct-to-resident messaging, the use of strategic staff and communication through urban planning processes. The review of active citizenship in these cities concludes with a section that classifies modes of active citizenship in terms of formal and informal participation. Next, this chapter reviews the particular material and economic challenges that shrinking cities face, with a particular focus on how these relate to communication strategies, and what the professionals in these cities are doing to overcome these material challenges. Finally, this chapter reviews the extent to which the communication between citizens and government staff is *dialogical*, using Kent and Taylor's (2002) five tenets as a guide.

## Building Active Citizenship – Communication Methods

As noted in the literature review, active citizens are critical to the creation and maintenance of thriving cities because they provide government leaders the necessary understanding of resident needs, desires and problems. Further, as active citizens they are able to participate in the identification and resolution of challenges that the city faces

(Putnam, 1995a). Communities with active citizens are better able to more rapidly and accurately assess and respond to community needs (Cuthill & Fein, 2005). With this literature in mind, the interviews were first coded and analyzed to investigate how are public relations professionals in shrinking cities working to build relationships and foster active citizen engagement around the goal of urban development and growth?

**Traditional Communication Methods.** As expected, all of the cities utilize traditional communication methods to communicate with residents. Of these, the most popular were media calls, press releases and press events. A professional from the City of Detroit spoke to this specifically, making an interesting observation that most new releases are given the appropriate amount of attention from the media because the city is a large urban center within the region or, in this case, the state.

> First off is with news releases depending on what it is. Some things don't require news releases, but we start with a news release. Because we have an added advantage of being the largest city in Michigan, it's just like people care what happens in Detroit, so when we serve things out, we do have to … some of them we don't have to even really go back and check the trees. People will call us saying I want to do a story on this (Detroit 2).

A professional from the City of Rochester spoke of how they have experienced a positive return on using news releases and similar, more traditional methods, to communicate. "Then, we issue 500 and something news releases, so we rely on our media outlets. Each year, we're about 550 news releases. We conduct news conferences that are pretty well attended, so any time the mayor wants to hold the press conference,

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we can pretty much guarantee that we're going to get all the media that come to City Hall and hear what she has to say" (Rochester 3). Also from Rochester,

> The other ones are we issue press releases and media advisories. A press release would be to let somebody know what happened at a meeting or something like that and then a media advisory would be to alert people that a meeting has taken place. We also issue releases on a regular basis updating, just letting people know what meetings will be taking place later that month with ample notice. We run ads in the paper, legal ads and things like that. We post our meeting notices on a bulletin board in City Hall. Our website includes a calendar or upcoming events that people can watch. Any public meeting or public hearing would be notified on that calendar (Rochester 1).

City representatives also spoke highly of having and using the local cable channel. This was slightly surprising, given that the general assumption is that the number of viewers of public access channels has reduced over the past several years in exchange for other media platforms; however, professionals from Detroit, St. Louis and Cleveland were very willing to share testimonials about the work they have done and the positive feedback they have received from residents who do watch the channel. The City of Detroit specifically spoke to using this platform to highlight not only what the city is doing for the community or government announcements, but also to provide information on what other organizations are doing for the community. This has a relationship to the importance of active citizenship for that city because this other organizations are often

made up of residents – active citizens from the community. This is an example of active

citizens engaging in civic participatory behavior.

> What we do is a city programming on our local cable channel where we're
>
> highlighting non-profits and the great work that they're doing. We are also
>
> highlighting block clubs and the great work that they're doing. It's kind of a good
>
> news channel for us. On that channel, we also had the scrolling stills
>
> advertisement where we invite them out to business and recreation we're going to
>
> have. For instance, our Senior Olympics, we showed on there who the gold
>
> medal. This is a good way to get the information out (Detroit 3).

**New Media.** The use of new media to communicate with residents and all publics

was a popular topic with nearly all of the professionals interviewed for this study. The

most prominent platform was the city website. A professional from the City of Rochester

spoke of how the city website was an easy platform to communicate to large audiences:

> Since we're responsible, we're accountable for the city's website. In my
>
> opinion, the city's website is the most cost-effective marketing tool that
>
> the city has. We can reach … We get quite high traffic. Our traffic
>
> numbers on the web are fairly high, so I think to me, that's the best way to
>
> … most cost-effective way to reach a lot of people as to the city's website
>
> (Rochester 3).

This professional went on to explain that with a website, unlike a news release, the city is

able to include significantly more information, such as an entire meeting agenda. This

allows the reader to easily access as much or as little information as they want or need without having to exercise a lot of effort to find it.

Related to this, a professional from Cleveland spoke of how they felt that the city was not leveraging new media in the best way possible. After having the same website for seven years, it was not supporting what they needed to do in that they couldn't share information with their "customers." In the end, professionals in Cleveland are now working to completely overhaul the website so that it better supports both one-way and two-way communication. This was particularly interesting given that, as noted above, the City of Cleveland's website scored particularly low when analyzed for dialogic communication.

A professional from the Cleveland spoke to the important changes and opportunities that new media provides for communicating with residents.

> I think just overall that's been something that government has always strived to be, to get people engaged. I think the difference is now ... And something that we are maybe a little slow to adapt to ... is that we have avenues now to do that ourselves. We have avenues now, via social media and all of the new mediums and tactics that we have out there now, to engage people directly. Part of that, though, is monitoring and listening to what people are saying, to understanding where that's coming from and then acting on it and taking that minute to engage them, whether you were part of that conversation or you're basically butting into somebody else's conversation (Cleveland 1).

This professional went on to discuss how the shift towards new media has been slow throughout the city, but the changes that have occurred have had positive impacts for both city operations and engaging citizens. She felt that, through new media, residents "are much more aware of community meetings and things like that, so then they do get more involved." She went on further to explain how beneficial it has been to be able to reach "the people we serve" directly, adding:

> Even if they don't participate in person or get involved actively doing something, at least they're part of a conversation now. At least they're coming to the table and having opinions whether negative or positive. At least they're attentive. I think there's a lot more people moving from inattentive to attentive, but it's a slow shift (Cleveland 1).

Discussions in the interviews related to new media often quickly related to opportunities for active citizenship as well. A professional from the City of St. Louis spoke of how communication to date has been "primarily one way," (St. Louis 3) but with the growing use of new media tools such as Facebook, citizens are now able to easily promote issues and concerns.

For instance, one participant from Cleveland spoke of the crucial role new media, social media in particular, played during a recent crisis (when three young women were discovered living as prisoners for years in the home of one resident). She spoke in particular about how these tools enhanced their ability to communicate with multiple publics:

When the three young ladies were discovered in Cleveland last May, I think that

changed a lot for us. I was part of that situation because I was in safety then.

Obviously our numbers jumped, just in terms of social media and people paying

attention to us, but it brought attention to the fact that we were out there and

people could engage with us. Those types of emergencies and situations, while

bittersweet, can do a lot to help us engage (Cleveland 1).

Related to social media, the City of St. Louis utilizes a social media platform

specifically for neighborhood groups called NextDoor. Professionals in the city have

found that, even though it has only been in place for just over a year, it has had a big

impact on how the government can interact with residents and further, encouraging

citizens to be more active. The functionality, users and potential impact of NextDoor is

discussed more completely below in a section dedicated to government initiated

programs in these cities.

**Direct-to-Resident Messaging.** In short, city staff frequently emphasized the

importance and effectiveness of communicating directly with residents. In Detroit, they

do this two to three times per week via attendance at block club meetings. They use these

face-to-face interactions to begin a conversation that is then continued via email and

phone. Also in Detroit, there is a City Briefing that is emailed and mailed out once per

month – more if needed. This City Briefing goes directly to residents and Detroit

professionals have found that it is effective at communicating information, especially for

those residents who aren't actively online and prefer to receive the paper mailing. For his

part, a Cleveland professional also mentioned mailings as being effective, particularly

when information is included with the local utility bill. "I think if we would look into our portfolio now, the most effective mechanism we have to communicate with customers is the bill, because everybody gets one and pretty much everybody opens it. If you can put some messaging on the bill or in the bill as an insert it's always ... probably a reasonable effective way for us communicate based on the way we're set up now" (Cleveland 3).

A professional from the City of Detroit also mentioned how ad hoc interpersonal conversations between city staff and residents play a large role in communicating messages about city programs and initiatives. As one participant put it:

With me, I'm a city employee, and in my block everybody expects me to know everything. I'm always the bearer of information to the whole block. I happen to be the block captain too, so they're like, okay, what are we doing about this? I'm always the one that's passing information on or calling to say or checking to say, hey, don't forget garbage collection is one day late. Remember tomorrow is a holiday or whatever. I do that a lot on my block. We rely on our employees to get the word out (Detroit 2).

In addition to messages that are communicated directly with residents, messages are also communicated with strategic partners such as community groups, churches and nonprofit organizations. In a familiar example of the diffusion of innovations, these partners then become champions for the cause, or information and help to carry this message to all of their customers. This expands the reach and potential impact of each message (Rogers, 2003).

**The Use of Special/Strategic Staff.** Direct communication is amplified in the subject cities by organizing city agencies along district or neighborhood lines, and by devoting specific staff to serve specific neighborhoods. In Detroit, one professional described this as being the "boots on the ground" for neighborhood issues and challenges. In fact, Detroit has extended this district-based structure to include the city council members (via a ward system of representation). This has resulted in seven districts "complimented" by two managers and a deputy manager in each district, which helps to move information "further and faster" (Detroit 3).

Perhaps one of the most interesting examples of the government organization aligning with neighborhoods is in St. Louis through the Citizens' Service Bureau which operates under the umbrella of the Neighborhood Stabilization Team. The Neighborhood Stabilization Team has two parts. First are the Neighborhood Stabilization Officers or Neighborhood Improvement Specialists. These individuals primarily work in the field in each of 28 wards throughout the city. The other portion is Citizen Service Center, which is a contact center and "often times, many citizens and stakeholders' first point of contact with municipal government." (St. Louis 3) The Citizens' Service Bureau takes "calls ranging from streetlights being out to potholes to high weeds and grass, building code violations … you name it, we pretty much handle it. We do a lot of information and referral just to other departments." This is done through one customer service supervisor and eight customer service representatives available Monday through Friday, eight to five to answer the calls and serve the entire City of St. Louis – 318,416 people in 2013 (US Census Bureau, 2014). The Citizens' Service Bureau call center takes approximately

9,000 calls per month and enters approximately 4,000 service requests that respond to citizen reports of issues impacting their quality of life. These service requests are entered into a program called CityWorks and then "get disseminated to the various operating departments within city government for investigation and resolution, "according to one professional from St. Louis (St. Louis 3).

Interestingly, the Citizens' Service Bureau also communicates with "our citizens" via Twitter.

> They can tweet issues and pictures to us that we translate to service request, they can enter service requests themselves online through the city's web portal, they can email us …. I'm trying to think what else. Then also the neighborhood improvement specialists, the 28 people that work in the field, part of their job is to make observations and then come back and enter a service request on quality of life issues.   Now this neighborhood improvement specialists, the people that work in the field, they are definitely the eyes and the ears and act as the liaisons between residents, businesses, other concerned stakeholders and municipal governments. They are way more active in the community with sharing information about development, issues and concerns, trends with crime, crime prevention and other quality of life issues. They work closely with groups to abate, permanently resolve public nuisances. They also do community projects such as gardening and playgrounds and things of that nature (St. Louis 3).

In both Detroit and Rochester, the neighborhood level government offices have an impact on active citizenship. In Detroit, residents use these offices to share information

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such as job notices. Residents then share this information with friends and family members. Also, neighborhood associations will work with these local offices to share information and improve the community (Detroit 3; Rochester 1). For example, the Regent Park neighborhood in Detroit is currently working with their local office to start a neighborhood radio patrol, where neighbors would volunteer their time to patrol throughout the day, in order to deter crime (Detroit 3). Professionals in Rochester reported similar experiences with grassroots organizations and neighborhood leaders working in each quadrant connecting with the neighborhood service center administrator to establish "very good working relationships" (Rochester 1). Through the discussions during the interviews, professionals from Detroit, St. Louis and Rochester noted that the governments have implemented neighborhood departments or offices that are able to focus on the specific issues of a smaller geographic area within a city (Detroit 1, 2, 3; St. Louis 1, 3; Rochester 1, 2, 3). The professionals commented that this is one of the primary and most effective, ways that the city as a whole is communicating with residents – as was discussed earlier in this analysis. However, these strategic, neighborhood level staff are not only important because of how the cities are communicating; they also play an important role in overcoming the challenges that shrinking cities face.

In Rochester, services are delivered on a quadrant basis. As part of the Neighborhood and Business Development Department, the city has been divided into four geographic areas and each of those quadrants a "Neighborhood Service Center" (Rochester 3). Those service centers are in the neighborhood and residents can go to the

service center with requests, such as getting information on a permit application that they might have seen in your neighborhood. The staff in these offices are able to interact one-on-one with the neighborhood organizations and residents regarding any issue, such as dead trees, crocked or downed stop signs, and stray animals or missed trash collection (Rochester 3). Another professional from Rochester explained that there is a separate planning division in the neighborhood and business development area. This office creates the neighborhood plans and works on other projects such as street revitalization (Rochester 2).

A professional from Cleveland (3) also spoke about the importance of high quality customer service for residents. The Citizens Service Bureau has spent a "significant chunk" of time over the past two years improving the customer service process and responses. All of this is in an effort to improve resident opportunities to communicate with the city. A professional from Detroit explained that his/her city has strategic staff placed throughout neighborhoods to communicate with residents. This was originally the "Mayor's Office of Community Affairs", and then the "Neighbor City House" and is now simply the "Department of Neighborhoods" (Detroit 1). These local offices are able to work with individuals or groups to resolve their problems, which are often related to the challenges of shrinking cities. Therefore, at a very local and individual level, these offices are crucial in the process of overcoming these challenges.

Although slightly different, but still related, the City of St. Louis also operates a "Business Assistance Center" (St. Louis 2). The center is designed primarily for small businesses in the city that need to get business licenses or more information on processes.

Business owners can go to this office, and "someone in that office takes them by the hand and leads them through whatever process it takes to get them off and going or to make whatever changes they need to make to their business whatever it may be" (St. Louis 2). This is important because growing the economy is also important to combating decline.

**Urban Planning, Communication, and Citizen Engagement.** Throughout the interviews, participants spoke specifically about how to design urban planning processes which facilitate communication and feedback from residents and stakeholders. This was especially true of the interviews with planning, economic development or engineering staff, more so than of the interviews with the public relations professionals. These urban planning staffers explained that "by law" (Rochester 3) public input is required for many of the planning projects that a city executes, especially on publicly funded projects. This public input is usually gathered through public meetings, which are publicized through the communications departments (instead of via the planning departments). For example, a public relations professional from Rochester explained that in their city, a public meeting news release is issued every week. This release includes information about all of the public meetings from the regular city council, planning commission, zoning or preservation meetings to special meetings about local projects (such as repaving a certain street in a neighborhood).

In short, most cities require some form of formal public input prior to even the most routine planning decisions. For example, one participant (Rochester 1) explained Rochester's feedback process, using the construction of a new "drive-thru" for a restaurant as an example. He explained that this could be a situation where many

residents would be concerned because they would want a more pedestrian friendly

neighborhood and might perceive drive-thrus as counter to that idea. It is through the

urban planning feedback process that these residents can voice these concerns.

So, for example, in Rochester, residents will usually begin with the neighborhood

service center administrator, which is a local office within the neighborhood and will then

be directed to the public meeting or website for more information. With this information,

> We'll go back and do some design and then come back with say 50% plans
>
> or something to the community and say do we hear what you were saying
>
> and how we're reacting to that. Then take that information back and then
>
> that kind of follows right through the construction (Rochester 2).

This example explains how the communication process in urban planning can truly help

to shape and change the built environment that creates the residents neighborhoods. The

professional concluded by saying that "on a project level, you kind of take a cradle to the

grave [approach] with public communication" (Rochester 2). This also indicates that

these professionals understand that communication is critical to rebuilding and the

planning and development process and, even more so, they have recognized that

communication must incorporated from the very beginning to the very end.

For their part, professionals in St. Louis (2) explained some special urban

planning programs that they have in place today that require public communication,

including tax abatement, special incentives and TIF (tax increment financing) districts. In

each of these programs, there is a public input process built in and required by state

statute. With the real estate abatement process, an ordinance is required from the Board

of Aldermen. In order to get this ordinance, a public hearing is held at the committee level and then elevated to the Board of Aldermen after approval. According one participant, these public meetings give an opportunity for any interested to attend and comment on the specific project. They went on to point out that these meeting are often attended by minority-owned local businesses who are looking to have an opportunity to bid on the project, or by residents who wish to influence the final design of projects before they reach fruition. As one St. Louis participant explained:

> We have one we're working on right now that just got approval a week or so ago at the Board of Aldermen. It's undergone a number of changes as a result of the Aldermen working with her constituents and getting back to us and altering the legislation that is going through the Board of Aldermen. It's a twelve story apartment building with retail on the first floor. There was interest by the residents on the design, on enough parking, on energy efficiency, and on just a whole range of things that got addressed in that legislative process before the final vote came on a piece of legislation that authorizes tax abatement for that particular project (St. Louis 2).

In Rochester, a professional explained a similar process that was used to create or update master plans for the city as a whole. In addition to the public meetings, professionals from Rochester conducted a large community survey, predominantly using the website, to collect community ideas and feedback and then used that information to guide the changes in the plan.

In particular, all three professionals from the City of Rochester spoke about a current redevelopment project in the downtown area and how the city has tried to solicit public support for, and engagement in, the project through an innovative social media campaign. As one respondent explained:

> We have a redevelopment in the heart of downtown, an eight-acre site that's being redeveloped. It's right in the heart of Main Street. It's historic, and how often do you get the chance to redevelop eight acres of your core of downtown? Part of that is creating new streets, new open space and we had a public, not a contest, but we solicited suggestions for names, so name 'Midtown' … It's called the 'Midtown Rising Redevelopment'. We received over 330 submissions for naming a new street. A new infrastructure was built there, so we're announcing this week that we're naming a street and naming a new open space plaza based on submitted names from the public. We did a social media campaign, we built an online web form for folks to submit (Rochester 3).

Interestingly, however, when discussing the most effective means for reaching out to the public on planning proposals, professionals from Rochester, Detroit and St. Louis all suggested that face-to-face discussions with residents during the planning process (rather than via mass media or even websites or social media networks) to be the "most effective." In these face-to-face discussions, administrators attend evening meetings and are able to speak directly with residents and provide them additional information.

**Defining and Classifying Modes of Active Citizenship**

In the interviews, it became clear that, in addition to describing the ways they reach out to and communicate with citizens, participants also articulated fundamental distinctions between forms of active citizenship. In doing so, these city officials recognized that there are multiple pathways to become engaged with city governance—some are formal (government-led) and others are informal and emerge from individual initiative, grassroots groups, or civic organizations.

**Formal (Government-led) Participation.** One of the most obvious types of active citizenship or participation is through government hosted events and activities. This type of participation is usually considered formal participation. Some of this type of participation was discussed by the professionals when speaking about the planning process, such as in the case of the Midtown Rising Redevelopment project in Rochester. Public meetings were usually the first method of engagement that the professionals referenced with regard to citizens being active. A professional from the City of Detroit explained that through these meetings government officials are able to get a better understanding of what is important to residents. For example, at the time of the interview lighting, crime, education and bus service were common items.

A representative from Rochester discussed often being surprised by more residents coming to formal public meetings than expected and how that passion for activism was not tied to just one issue.

> We had a meeting a couple months ago. We had 80 people out for a
> meeting; we are expecting 20 at the most. People are passionate about

wanting the bike lanes; they want to ride their bikes in the city. They want

us to be plowing the trails that we have. We find that kind of passion

spilling over into charitable things and working with youth and those

kinds of things (Rochester 2).

 The City of Rochester has used the feedback received from residents during these formal

meetings to begin implementing real change. For example, starting in 2011, the city has

been creating more bike lanes and bike boulevards to ensure safe passage for cyclists and

bikers.

Beyond public meetings, many of the professionals also discussed how residents

are active through formal programs or initiatives, some of which are led by the city

government. In St. Louis (St Louis 1), it's "Operation Brightside" that focuses on

neighborhood clean-up. In Detroit (Detroit 2), there are two big initiatives, Motor City

Makeover which focuses on city clean-up and Angels Night which focuses on crime

prevention. Each of these often gets thousands of volunteers. The neighborhood clean-up

event in Rochester (Rochester 2, 3) is called "Rochester's Clean Sweep."

**Informal (Citizen-led) Participation.** At the same time, city-sponsored events

are not the only way that the professionals acknowledged active citizens. Participants also

spoke of how citizen engagement is cultivated by a larger civic culture of volunteerism

and charitable giving. For example, there is a group in Detroit called "Life Builders" that

began by helping single mothers purchase and restore homes and has now expanded to

helping the broader community (Detroit 3).

For her part, a professional from Rochester (2) noted that residents were active in charitable giving by stating "We've always been a very strong city as far as contributions to pretty much anything but our annual fund drives for United Way and all those kind of things are typically very high level of participation from city residents." They elaborated to explain that being an active and responsible citizen is "culturally ingrained" in the resident population in Rochester.

He suggested that it all started with George Eastman who after much success making cameras, built a theater in the city and started the Center for Governmental Research to try and improve the government. Soon after, Xerox and Bausch and Lomb followed suit. Even though none are headquartered in Rochester anymore, the employees of those organizations "have that spirit that you have to give back to the community that you live in and all that kind of thing." In short, for this participant, active citizen engagement is an "attitude" shared by most everyone in the city. "I think it's just something that's almost taken for granted is that we're going to try and take care of people the best that we can and contribute in whatever way we can."

Finally, the professionals spoke of the role neighborhood groups play in cultivating and providing an outlet for active citizen engagement. St. Louis (1) in particular spoke highly of the different neighborhood groups and ways that they connect residents with one another and then also these residents to government operations and services. One professional explained how they have "a really strong neighborhood ownership model…like a Neighborhood Watch program on steroids." In this program, a neighborhood call group is setup; neighbors can then individually sign up to be part of an

email chain, and they all have each other's phone numbers and addresses, along with any other details that each wants to disclose such as travel plans or work schedules. It's a way for neighbors to keep a better eye on one another and when they see something amiss, they can get that information out directly to their neighbors or the police.

In some cases, professionals discussed programs that helped facilitate this bottom-up, citizen-led participation. For instance, St. Louis uses a NextDoor social media platform which helps residents connect with one another online (St. Louis 3). The system validates residency through a credit card billing address which ensures that residents are who they say they are online. Residents can either talk in small groups within their neighborhood or they can post messages and exchange information with neighboring communities with the city at large. NextDoor helps residents to feel like they weren't alone and for them to partner to reverse problems in their neighborhood. It also allows that particular neighborhood to learn best practices from another neighborhood that experienced similar issues.

All of this information comes together to help us understand how city officials in shrinking cities are working to build relationships and foster active citizenship. It is most important to note that there is not one direct path, but multiple ways to communicate and engage in dialogue with residents. Starting with traditional communication as the most common, including press releases and traditional media but also encompassing new media as a more modern platform for engagement, study participants also emphasized the importance of engaging citizens through the urban planning process. Participants also discussed creative means for directly messaging residents and even forming new

government departments or structure to create special/strategic staff that can engage with citizens at the neighborhood or district level. All of this culminates into how professionals in shrinking cities are fostering active citizenship in order to improve the city as a whole. In order to more scientifically investigate, analyze and understand these communication tactics, a final section will address how these communications can be considered dialogical. Next, however, it is important to understand the challenges that these professionals face when engaging and fostering active citizens.

**Communication and the Material Realities of Shrinking Cities**

Throughout the interviews, the professionals were particularly passionate about the economic and material challenges faced by city leaders and city residents. Because of this, the presentation of findings would not be complete without acknowledging these important elements including increased vacant and abandoned properties, high crime rates, failing infrastructure and reduced government capacity. All of these come together to form a spiral of decline that accelerates the negative image that these cities have and impedes communication towards recovery. Recognizing these factors aids in understanding both how and why professionals in these shrinking cities are working to overcome these challenges, by emphasizing transparency, leveraging strategic staff and cultivating active citizens.

**Key Challenges Faced by Shrinking Cities**. An investigation into the communication behavior and practices of professionals in shrinking cities would not be complete without addressing the challenges that they face in doing this. Specifically, professionals in shrinking cities face challenges that are unique or at least amplified due

to the urban decline and population loss that they have suffered. The professionals interviewed in this research were eager to share stories and their experiences about the challenges that they have faced and then how they have worked to overcome these challenges. This section therefore draws on the perspectives and experiences of participants to address the second research question: What challenges do these professionals face in building these relationships and foster active citizenship engagement, and what strategies do they use to overcome these challenges?

The concept of "shrinking cities" is a critical part of this research. It is not only an element that makes this research unique, but shrinking cities are also places where active citizenship is especially important in order to begin the process towards recovery. Indeed, all professionals interviewed acknowledged that their city had suffered from central city population loss and that this had created unique and complicated challenges. As we know from the urban studies literature, shrinking cities suffer from many challenges that are often interconnected and, because of this, difficult to overcome professionals spoke specifically about intertwined challenges that they have encountered and witnessed, including housing vacancy, crime, reduced finances and a negative image.

One professional from Rochester explained, "people were leaving neighborhoods and we couldn't ... The city couldn't tear down the dilapidated houses quick enough… We have a lot of housing stock that hasn't been kept up but a demand isn't there" (Rochester 2). They went on to explain that many homeowners have moved out of the city but were unable to sell their homes. Some of these were used as rental properties as one time or another, but most are now simply abandoned with no one to care for them. It is "a real

detriment to the neighborhood because they're not watching their homes or taking care of them and it makes it ... People who actually want to live in the neighborhood end up either moving somewhere else or get discouraged because we can't get these dead beat landlords basically to maintain their properties" (Rochester 2).

As we have already learned, the large number of vacant homes and businesses is a significant issue for these shrinking cities. The high vacancy rates can be linked to many of the other problems these cities face, including crime which leads to the communication of an overall negative city image. The most common physical solution for dealing with this issue is simply demolition. If the vacant structure doesn't exist anymore, it eliminates the possibility that criminal activity can setup shop. However, even after the physical vacant building issue has been resolved, the negative image may continue to linger. For that reason, city professionals must also work to specifically address the negative image as well.

Moreover, with property tax revenues as a city's primary source of income, the high vacancy rates mean significantly reduced funding for city infrastructure and services. A professional from St. Louis also explained that residents are frustrated with the reduced capacity of the government as well.

Sometimes they'll say, "Well, why can't you take down more buildings?" Well, let me put it in perspective for you. It costs 'x' amount of dollars to take down a house. We allot 'y' amount of dollars to do so. But are you willing to pay for that instead of ... because that's what it comes ... We have a finite number of dollars in

our budget; and with public safety being our top priority, here are our choices (St. Louis 1).

This demonstrates the importance of communication and building an open and trustworthy relationship with the residents of the city because even when the physical problem is being resolved or removed, residents are still asking more questions and seeking information towards a solution. The challenges for shrinking cities, significant vacancy rate leading to increased crime and the reduced capacity for the government to operate, has created a spiral of decline. The spiral of decline – vacancy and outmigration, crime, underfunded services, and so on— also has consequences for local business that now have fewer potential customers.

This spiral of decline creates the negative image of shrinking cities that the literature has explained. A professional from the City of Detroit explained that they wished they were doing more to change this negative image, "I think sometimes we just haven't been as focused on that in terms of promoting Detroit and trying to change that loss of population. I don't think we have done a great job with that. There is some emphasis on that but some of it comes from outside the city government" (Detroit 2). They added that the negative image has a "chilling effect" in some ways and explaining that it is hard to focus on changing the conversation when there are so many services to provide and few staff members to do the work.

> We're not trying to act like it's all wonderful here, but there are issues. City government hasn't been as focused on trying to change the conversation as much as I think we could be and should be. I think sometimes you get caught up in just

trying to make sure the services are provided. You know what I mean? You know

we have a role to play. We've got to make sure that trash gets picked up. When

you're called, you got to come and show up because somebody's hurt or sick or

needs medical attention (Detroit 2).

A professional from Cleveland echoed these same concerns. "Cleveland as a

whole sometimes, particularly by the national media, has been viewed as a, we're kind of

like the poster child for what is going wrong in urban centers. Whether it's foreclosure

crisis, how, you know, abandonment of housing, population loss.  So it is something that

is part of the, the basic conversation in the Cleveland community" (Cleveland 2).

Of particular interest is that when professionals from these cities speak about what

is being done to combat decline, all spoke of the many – often times innovative –

programs that the city is running. Many of these programs involve strategic partners

including nonprofit organizations and private developers. The interesting fact here is that

even as communication professionals (at least in part) who were being interviewed about

communication practices, they were not able to speak about communication goals,

messages, tactics and impacts as easily as they were able to speak about their private-

public partnerships. This may indicate that the value of communication as a contributor to

the solution, in conjunction with these programs, has not been fully recognized.

**Overcoming the Challenges of Shrinking Cities.** As we have learned, the

challenges of shrinking cities are not only severe, but compound each other making it

particularly difficult to find a solution. Through the interviews, several tactics that each

of the cities are using to combat decline were identified. These tactics begin with the

city's overall communication strategy – identifying what key messages are repeated within regular communication with residents and what tactics they are using. This is followed by the strategies used to combat specific issues such as vacancy and the negative city image cultivated by long-term urban decline. Then, a further explanation of how urban planning programs and strategic deployments of government staff play a role. Finally, the role of active citizenship in overcoming the challenges is discussed. All of this works to answer the second part of research question two: What strategies do they use to overcome these challenges?

*Overall Communication Challenges – The Importance of Transparency.* In order to investigate active citizenship and each city's perspective on cultivating active citizen participation in governance, each professional was asked about key communication messages from the city, past experiences with active citizenship, and examples from their own experiences. None of the cities specifically listed active citizenship within their core messages or the important role that residents play in community building or an indication that the city would like to support a partnership with residents. Rochester and St. Louis included education, public safety and economic development as themes of the city's key messages to publics. Cleveland and Detroit emphasized service delivery over profit-making and awareness of departmental specific services. Cleveland also mentioned job growth, the promotion of local businesses and the economy overall, as well as education. The alignment of key messages and staff awareness of this alignment related to the organization's public relations grand strategy.

Professionals interviewed from all of the cities placed more of an emphasis on open, honest and, in particular, transparent communication with residents than on the content of particular messages. A professional from St. Louis (St. Louis 3) explained that "in all areas of city government adopting a policy of open government and transparency and improving that." For example, on the city website, statistical information is available related to not only demographics, but also the performance of city departments via the Citizens Service Bureau.

In a similar vein, one participant from Cleveland (3) explained how transparency as a strategy is especially important when things don't go according to plan and a mistake is made or an issue arises. "If the triggering mechanism is factually correct and you just made a mistake and something is wrong. It goes ... It's that old lesson that honesty is the best policy, you just say, "We messed up." This can become particularly important when these cities are trying new things, many of which may not work as intended, in order to reverse the negative impacts of being a shrinking city.

Interestingly, one official in Cleveland (2) spoke about transparency with residents in slightly different terms, in this case by discussing the role of data collection and analysis, coming out of interactions with residents over planning issues. In short, in her opinion, where public administration, urban planning and communication meet is an opportunity to become very "data driven." She went on to add, "I think, I think that we'll be able to use data more and more, in terms of what the city is doing to really hone our message, messages and make them sharper and clearer. But then also try and pull the data out of the people that are interacting with us to better target our messages. I think

that's going to be a trend that local governments really, really follow over the next couple of years."

***Combating Negative Urban Images with Strategic Initiatives.*** All four of these shrinking cities have expressed that the negative image of decline is a challenge for their community. They have several different ways that they are working to combat this including special projects, beautification and clean-up programs, crime patrols and strategic messaging. The most common of those tactics are the beautification and clean-up programs first mentioned in the active citizenship section of this document.

In Detroit, there is a program called "Motor City Makeover." This program occurs every spring and involves staff from many different departments as well as community volunteers.  A professional (Detroit 1) explained that "it's really driven by the city, but it's the volunteers that actually make everything happen in terms of the clean-up effort. Then there's one, another campaign in the fall. It's not so much driven by the public but they certainly have full participation in it." In Rochester, the clean-up program is called "Rochester's Clean Sweep" which is a city-wide program that occurs in the spring. This event is usually attended by 500-800 volunteers and has been happening successfully for the past six years. The professionals in Rochester (3) found this program to be important because they leverage social media and new releases to understand what the residents want to change about their own city. Once the city collects the responses and determines the most desired project, they supply t-shirts, gloves, rakes and shovels, and set up groups with all the tools and materials they need to beautify their neighborhoods. This city sets up a large tent and provides all of the volunteers with breakfast and lunch. Throughout

the day they are able to accomplish multiple projects all across the city to maximize the impact for all residents. In St. Louis, (1) the clean-up program is called "Operation Brightside" which is not a single day event, but an ongoing initiative. This initiative focuses on graffiti removal from private and public buildings and also does "blitzes" similar to neighborhood clean-ups. The city provides free flowers for neighbors to plant together and notifies residents when special crews are being sent to a neighborhood so that they can join in.

These cities are also specifically looking to combat the negative image of high crime. In Detroit (2) there is an initiative that occurs annually every October called "Angels Night" that is focused on crime prevention – specifically anti-arson. In addition to this, the emergency manager and policy chief have been focused on increased the actual number of patrols and the residents' awareness of this increase. This has resulted in a significant improvement in response time and has allowed the police department to go after illegal activities "with a big hammer." The professional (Detroit 3) explained that many now have a feeling that things are much safer. They attributed this to legislators and city leadership passing laws that support this improvement. For example, there is currently a project in response to legislation that is installing street lights all over the city, which has been a problem for years. They are currently installing 600-700 street lights per week and they city professionals have heard a great response from residents about the program.

With all of this change, residents in Detroit have recognized the importance of demonstrating progress and making others aware of the change. Communities and

neighborhoods are hosting home tours and events to promote their small part of the larger

city and the government community centers are getting involved to support these events

as well (Detroit 1). The professionals in these cities are recognizing the importance of

telling this new story of improvement and change as well. A professional in Rochester

(Rochester 2) said, "I think we don't do enough for that. I think actually Mayor Menino,

former Mayor Menino from Boston was here…and he talked about how he just drove

around said, "The city is great. It's clean and all those kind of things. You really need to

promote that." I don't think we do enough of that with the city."

Another professional, also from Rochester, added to this idea in a separate

interview stating:

> The Communications Bureau should be chief among the tools to make that
>
> happen, to show the good things, to tell the good story of the city, the things that
>
> are great about Rochester, street life, sidewalk plowing, curbside refuse pickup,
>
> street sweeping, vitality … It's our job as the Communications Bureau to show
>
> off the city, although we don't have a tourism and convention function, I mean,
>
> there's no one dedicated to selling the city. It really is our job to fill that role to
>
> make sure that the city is always moving forward and being progressive as it can,
>
> and just being portrayed as a great place to live for and raise a family type thing.
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> The Communications Bureau is critical to telling that story to helping cities grow
>
> their tax bases (Rochester 3).

**Overcoming Challenges by Cultivating Active Citizens.** Of all of the tactics

that cities are using to combat the negative impacts of being a shrinking cities, none are

particularly as interesting, with regard to this research, as the impact of active citizens. Professionals from all four of the cities acknowledged the power and importance of active citizens in order to have a vibrant and thriving city. One professional from the City of Cleveland spoke about engaging residents in the conversation about the future of the city:

> I think just overall that's been something that government has always strived to be, to get people engaged. I think the difference is now ... And something that we are maybe a little slow to adapt to ... Is that we have avenues now to do that ourselves. We have avenues now, via social media and all of the new mediums and tactics that we have out there now, to engage people directly. Part of that, though, is monitoring and listening to what people are saying, to understanding where that's coming from and then acting on it and taking that minute to engage them, whether you were part of that conversation or you're basically butting into somebody else's conversation (Cleveland 1).

This professional went on to talk about the partnership that is necessary between the city and residents and how each party has a role and responsibilities. She noted that public education is important. For example, the professional went on to explain, the city may put out messages saying, "Change your clocks. Change your batteries in your smoke detectors." And, in response to the residents doing this, "We're going to be here to fight the fire, but we need you to make sure you have a working smoke detector and you're testing it" (Cleveland 1).

A professional from Detroit also spoke of how residents play an important role in making change happen for the city. In the Detroit Department of Administrative Hearings, they are actually "training residents who are interested in identifying blight and filling out reports so the residents can get involved in solidifying their own neighborhoods by keeping track of houses that they feel may not be being kept up to code" (Detroit 1). With a city covering more than 139 square miles it is difficult for the limited staff to find every violation. This professional found that "people are passionate about the city and their community and this empowers them to get trained and to be able to identify the code violations, so you get all those extra people out there canvassing the neighborhoods is an important thing."

In St. Louis, there is the neighborhood watch program that the city staff have focused a lot of energy on to ensure that it is effective and truly empowers the residents to have control over their own neighborhood. This is important because it highlights how professionals in these shrinking cities are recognizing that they cannot combat the negative impact of decline alone, they need to engage and cultivate active citizens to be most successful. Through this program, residents are trained to immediately call the police and what information the police will need to respond to an issue. The professional went on to explain through a "broken window theory;"

> …if bad guys see a broken window in a house that shows that somebody doesn't care about that house, or maybe nobody's watching that house, then that's a place for them to set up shop and do bad things, or to break into that home to steal whatever's left, that sort of theory. So this is to stop all of that. Then it goes a step

further. Let's say that you do catch a bad guy. Let's say you do have a burglar in your neighborhood. Now all these neighbors will get together and write victim impact statements for the judge, so that when this guy gets convicted, and a judge before might only give him probation or time served or something, because it was a burglary and nobody really came forward because they've already replaced their stuff through insurance or whatever. No, these neighbors are now coming forward and saying, "Hey, we don't want a jerk like this lurking around our neighborhood." So it's gotten much stronger sentences for bad guys, and they've also been able to get restraining orders against these guys. "Hey, if you've offended in my neighborhood, then we don't want you back here." So a judge will say, "You're not welcome in North Hampton. You cannot go within the borders of this neighborhood. Period. Ever. And if you do, if you're even caught there, you're in violation of your restraining order" (St. Louis 1).

These cities are attacking the challenges of being a shrinking city from every possible angle. And, the importance of the attack being a team effort, supported by partners and residents alike is clear as well. Although the statistics have yet to document any lasting change to the population decline, many of the professionals explained that they have personally witnessed signs that things may be slowing or even turning around.

**Reversing the Trend.** In the end, many of the professionals even noted that, from their perspective, there has been some positive change that has happened as a result of these programs and that perhaps there are signs that symptoms of being a shrinking city are turning around. A professional from St. Louis explained,

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We have [had population loss], although that's slowed down significantly to kind of a trickle. I think [in] the last census we lost a thousand people, which is a pretty minor number. We're seeing out-migration from certain neighborhoods, but then other neighborhoods are having significant increase in population with new development going on. Yes, there certainly historically has been a lot of that, because as you probably have discovered back in 1950 our population was around 850,000. Now we're 315,000 or 320,000, something like that. There's been a lot of out-migration through the years (St. Louis 2).

A professional from Detroit also mentioned witnessing the population loss slow or even reverse in some areas over the last four or five years, particularly in the downtown and midtown sections. This core area of the city stretched approximately three miles from the city center and includes a major university and a hospital system. But, they also added that there is still a "larger concern" for the outer areas within the City of Detroit (1). And all three professionals from Rochester also commented that they have seen a similar change with the downtown area following continued population losses in the '70s, '80s and '90s. "We're seeing a lot of people moving back into the downtown core which had pretty much been abandoned for the suburbs, but we find a lot of un-marrieds and folks whose kids have grown moving back into the city just so they can have walk to theater and those kind of things and just maybe get along with [out a] car and use them as transit and those kind of things." To this point, when asked what the most important thing was to take away from the interview, one Rochester professional said,

The most important thing to know. I think there has been, I don't know certainly since I've got here, there's a very positive attitude about the direction of the city going forward. Part of that is some of the projects I think that we have been doing … A really kind of transformational and I think people are really feeling some positive energy around that (Rochester 2).

Given all that we know about the distinctive challenges within shrinking cities, this positive attitude and outlook from the professionals is commendable. It also suggests that they will remain committed to solving the problems and that one day these cities may be restored.

**Dialogic Public Relations in Shrinking Cities**

The final part of the first research question is 'to what extent can these practices be described as 'dialogical'? That is, now that we have reviewed and understood how professionals in shrinking cities are working to build relationships and foster active citizen engagement, we can look further at these methods and compare them with Kent and Taylor's (2002) five tenets for dialogic communication. In their work, Kent and Taylor present these tenets as mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk and commitment. By conducting a review of these tenets we can begin to understand the role and importance of dialogic communication towards fostering active citizenship within shrinking cities.

**Mutuality.** In Kent and Taylor's description of the five tenets of dialogism, they define mutuality as being focused on the relationship between organizations and publics, in that they are tied together and they each need the other to exist. Hon and Grunig define control mutuality as "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to

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influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other" (Hon & Grunig, 1999). In this definition, we come to understand that if either party attempts to achieve control of the relationship there will be a decrease in satisfaction and, further, the communicator will be less informed, less competent. When organizations, in this case city government, and publics, in this case residents, each have some degree of control over one another the result is the "most stable, positive relationship" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 19).

It seems fairly obvious that a city and the residents within that city need one another, given that a city cannot exist without people. This makes the discussion of mutuality particularly interesting, especially with regard to the subject of this research which focuses on the communicative behavior of shrinking cities which have already lost a significant number of residents. What is important here is to investigate if, how, and to what degree or why the subject cities see the residents as necessary. In this scenario the residents are the public, and as such they have an expectation for more than an exchange relationship with city government; they expect the government to be concerned about their welfare (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

All of the professionals in each city recognized that residents are critical for the city. At the most basic level residents, as taxpayers, are necessary to communally fund city operations and services. In fact, it was not uncommon for the professionals to express that it is more than a relationship between equals, but that the city employees, in fact, work for the taxpayer as one did from St. Louis, "Here in the city, I work for you. I work

for the taxpayers. We all in this office work for the taxpayers" (St. Louis 1). Others spoke

of the legal requirement to engage residents in planning and development reviews. As

one city engineer from explained about St. Louis's process:

> There's public input built into the whole state statutes that authorize these
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> incentives. …. It's required that we have a public hearing before one of the
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> committees at the Board of Aldermen and we advertise that public hearing. We
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> post notices of that public hearing. It gives an opportunity for anyone interested
>
> to come to that public hearing and comment on the specific project (St. Louis 2).

Participants also discussed mutuality through the concept of public education.

For instance, one individual from Cleveland spoke at length about a city's responsibility

to educate the public about their responsibilities: "There's the public education

component there, but there's also the 'we're going to be here to fight the fire, but we need

you to make sure you have a working smoke detector and you're testing it' and so on and

so forth" (Cleveland 1). Other professionals spoke of educating the public to give them

confidence in the city's ability to provide services, "the other issue we deal with here is

going to be an issue of public confidence and you have to take the steps necessary to

maintain public confidence particularly in the water system. In a lot of instances things

from external sources can cause you to have to react and have some communications

prepared to deal with those" (Cleveland 3).

This attitude elevates the relationship and the need beyond merely taxpayers or a

funding stream but suggests a partnership to achieve shared goals – a partnership that

grows from the mutuality and the concern that they government is expressing for the

wellbeing of residents. Further, a public utilities official spoke of the city/resident responsibility for shared goals that may be even larger than the city itself: "I feel in public service, there's a lot of 'Here's what we can and are doing. Here's what we need you to do to help yourself" kind of a thing. On the sewer side over here, there's a big component for conserving and protecting the environment" (Cleveland 1).

**Propinquity.** In the tenets of dialogism, propinquity addresses frequent, spontaneous and genuine interaction with publics. The organization must understand that publics are necessary to make decisions, before the decisions are made. There were four themes identified within this tenet: two-way versus one-way communication, the possibility of different communication platforms or channels, the barriers to communication that each identified and the perspective on accomplishments and future changes.

*One or Two-Way Communication.* With regard to one or two-way communication tactics used by each city, participants from the cities engage in two-way communication and one-way communication with residents. For example, participants from Detroit and Cleveland spoke of pushing messages out to resident publics, through traditional communication methods. As one professional from Detroit said, "basically, any communications needs for the public, we get information out to the public and we get information out to the media for any programs and events from our department with the mayor's office or state council offices" (Detroit 1). These include the public access cable channel and press releases.

Representatives from Cleveland expressed a desire to engage residents more often in two-way communication, versus the common one-way methods that they currently use, hoping that their methods could become more than responding to inquiries rather and into initiating the conversation. She went on to explain, "right now what we're not very effective at is the pro-active communications. We tend to respond very well when customers call us. We've got our call center times down to a reasonable time period. We respond very quickly when we have a water main break and those sorts of things" (Cleveland 3).

With regard to two-way communication, a professional from St. Louis was very excited to share positive experiences using social media to begin a conversation with resident publics,

> Absolutely. There might be something where myself or the mayor or chief of staff or somebody sends out a Tweet, and maybe it's kind of a high-level idea. Maybe it's something that's going on in other cities of what would this look like in St. Louis? Would St. Louis be up for something like this, for example? Then people can kind of weigh-in and say, "I think it's a great idea" or "I think it's terrible" or "That wouldn't work here" or "Hey, that's exactly what we need here," whatever the case may be, and we kind of get a gauge" (St. Louis 1).

In summary, the professionals from these cities expressed an understanding that two-way communication is valuable and feedback from residents helps to build a positive relationship.

***Platforms and Channels.*** Throughout the interviews, each of the professionals spoke of many different platforms and channels that they used to facilitate communication with residents, including traditional media, face-to-face meetings and events, special neighborhood offices, partners and new media. All of the cities that were interviewed have some level of communication happening in all of these different ways, the cities that to be leveraging these platforms in ways which more often facilitate two-way, frequent and spontaneous communication also spoke of the success they have had with these methods.

All of the cities are still using traditional media, in predominantly traditional ways, to transmit messages from the city to the residents. The same can be said for face-to-face meetings and events, special neighborhood offices, and the use of partners to connect with resident groups. A professional from Detroit spoke very highly of the resident experience through public meetings:

> I think the meetings that are held in the public are valuable too with the Mayor's Office and city council, so they go into the community and into each of these districts so a have a chance to go out there and voice their opinions and either the Mayor himself will answer questions, the council members will ask questions and if somebody has particular issues they'll make sure to get the name and number of the people asking the questions to make sure they get a response as soon as possible (Detroit 1).

Many cities have established government offices within local neighborhoods or quadrants to provide an opportunity for face-to-face communication with residents within

their local geographic area of the city. A professional from Rochester explained the benefit of these and how they are helping to connect the city with partner organizations:

> In a particular quadrant you might have anywhere from a dozen to … well, some have fewer than others, more than others. There might be a neighborhood group or neighborhood association or there might be a community development corporation. There's all sorts of grassroots organizations working in each of the quadrants. The neighborhood leaders, the neighborhood service center administrators establish very good working relationships with those groups (Rochester 1).

It is clear that all of these cities are maximizing the use of as many platforms and channels as possible to communicate with residents. Whether intentional or not, this reflects the propinquity tenet of dialogic communication.

*New Media.* Throughout the interviews, over 30 different platforms for communication with residents were mentioned by the interviewees. At least one representative from each of the four cities mentioned the following platforms: community meetings, town halls, Facebook and Twitter. Three of the four cities discussed community access cable television, flyers, the website, neighborhood divisions of government, and mailing addresses while half of the cities mentioned community events, blogs, press conferences, city publications, press releases and face-to-face communication as important when communicating with residents. Finally, each of the following were mentioned by only one city: mobile devices, word of mouth, newspapers, GIS, email, Instagram, phone calls, YouTube, NextDoor and a customer service hotline.

It should be noted that these numbers indicate what the individual employee valued or felt was relevant to the conversation about communication with residents and do not reflect how many cities are actually using each of these platforms. That said, the professionals were likely inclined to discuss the channels that are most relevant or effective for combating the challenges of shrinking cities or promoting active citizenship. Over one third of all of these platforms mentioned can be considered new media, from websites to blogs to NextDoor (a social media platform developed specifically for residents of communities to connect with other residents and resident groups).

From this, it is clear that all of the cities are engaging in multiple platforms to communicate with residents, but perhaps the most interesting point is not a lack of access to new media, but *how* they are leveraging it for communicating with residents. For example, with regard to the expansion of new media platforms, one professional from a Cleveland stated "I think just overall that's been something that government has always strived to be, to get people engaged. I think the difference is now ... And something that we are maybe a little slow to adapt to ... Is that we have avenues now to do that ourselves" (Cleveland 1). This sentiment was shared by many of the other interviewees and demonstrates that they feel that they haven't maximized the potential that these platforms could provide.

However, professionals from these cities have seen the value and impact of new media. One professional from St. Louis discussed the use of Twitter to communicate rapidly with a resident about a problem and stated "It helped them to feel like they weren't alone" (St. Louis 3). Another employee from a city with high levels of active

citizenship stated, "That's kind of an interesting way that [social media] is changing for us and changing the way that we do business, because it's more of a direct pipeline to a resident" (St. Louis 1). With cities as large as these, it is logical that there would be a wide variety of platforms to communicate because there are many different audiences with whom each city must communicate.

*Challenges or Barriers.* Cities, especially urban centers like those interviewed for this study, have very large and diverse audiences. Cities are not only communicating with residents, but also with current, past or future developers, partners, industry leaders, and tourists. This makes mass communication particularly challenging. Even if we consider only the resident population, as was done for this study, there are residents of all ages, backgrounds, education levels, political parties, religions, and incomes. This adds to the complexity of communicating with residents, no matter the platform. For instance, many of the cities expressed a concern that focusing too much attention on new media could exclude senior populations or those who are not 'internet-savvy'. As one participant from Detroit put it:

> Actually our challenge is that we have [an] older population and so those social media platforms are great for people who are on it but the folks who aren't on it are the folks who still want you to send them a flyer in the mail or pick it up at the library. That's probably one of the challenges we have. Everybody is not online either. When we try to do city briefs, we do send it out in email but then we have to … We do know that some people because they just refuse to get an email

address, they're like, oh, I'm too old for all that. Just send it to me in the mail (Detroit 2).

It is very true that not all have access to new media, and it is an important for fact cities to recognize so that they can effectively communicate with all residents. This is most likely the best explanation for why none of these cities have abandoned the more traditional forms of communication. By using new media to expand their communication portfolio they are adding to the communication channels without reducing some of the more traditional channels which may be the only methods that certain residents have access to which enhances propinquity allowing for more forms of communication.

**Empathy.** The tenet of empathy builds on the communication patterns discussed in propinquity, in that within these frequent communications, the organization must foster an environment of trust and support defining empathy. The organization must value the public's opinion and work to view things from their perspective. Two examples of this were demonstrated through the interviews. First, the professionals emphasized the importance of transparency in communication and, second, through the use of collaborative initiatives with strategic staff.

In speaking with the city professionals, qualities of empathy became the most clear when talking about negative issue or citizen complaints. It is when something bad happens for a resident that a dialogue must happen or when a resident is expressing a concern that they need the city to resolve. All of the professionals from each of the cities expressed similar sentiment that being open and honest with the resident was by far the best tactic, in addition to working to resolve the issue as soon as possible. A

representative from St. Louis summarized this particularly well when they said, "We try to be empathetic and hear the customers concerns fully and to just comprehensively hear about the issue and what resources we can offer and pull together an effort to help improve the situation" (St. Louis 3). Professionals from St. Louis were also particularly passionate about a city-wide initiative to improve transparency in government, "That's where the city can say, "Here are the challenges that we have faced over the years, but here's what we're doing to fix it." I think that every time that you do have a problem, you have to own up to you. You have to lay it out there what the problem is and what you're going to do to fix it" (St. Louis 1).

A professional from Cleveland had a similar view on what message to send when residents complain or raise problems: "We fixed it. We learned from it. We're looking at our processes and you acknowledge those things and you just take responsibility for it. You can try to dance around it and get away from it but it just damages your own credibility long-term if you're doing that. When you make mistakes you just have to own up to it and say, we made a mistake" (Cleveland 3).

All of the cities have deployed strategic staff. These staff usually operate from geographically dispersed neighborhood or community centers in the city. Having these local centers with staff that is easily accessible is also an indicator of empathy because it demonstrates to residents that the city is supportive of each neighborhood. Together, the commitment to transparent communication and the strategic staff foster a trusting and supportive environment that empathy needs.

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**Risk.** The fourth tenet, risk, identifies that organizations do take some risk in valuing the publics opinion so highly as there is a possibility that the publics will disagree with the organization's original intent. The risk is that the organization must relinquish some power to the publics; however, the reward of this posture has the potential to be significantly greater than the risk (Kent & Taylor, 2002). This tenet can also relate to how cities respond to negative situations. In essence, the very fact that they are responding indicates that they have accepted the risk of disagreement. More so, it positively indicates that they value the resident and the relationship (back to mutuality) enough to work to resolve the issue.

All of the cities shared a similar opinion to that of one professional from St. Louis who said, "Every time there is something that's negative, I think you have to own up to it and then move on from it. Part of owning up to it, too, is explaining why we do or do not do something that might be under attack or questioned. Some of it might be money" (St. Louis 1). Many of the city professionals also explained that the Mayor plays a large role in how these situations are handled, as was explained by a different professional from St. Louis, "This all comes under the direction of the Mayor. He's an open and honest guy; therefore, his entire administration is open and honest, and we tell you the truth. If it's not all puppy dog tails and rainbows and roses, so be it. We have to deal with it" (St. Louis 1). In general, all of the cities have accepted the risk in communicating with the resident public and spoke of being committed to resolving issues that may arise from that accepted risk.

Further, cities such as Cleveland, Rochester and St. Louis have also demonstrated risk by implementing projects that residents have requested. For example, recall that the development of bike lanes in Cleveland (2) and Rochester (1) that were requested by resident groups. Also, a city engineer from St. Louis explained how the city holds public hearings to gather input on urban development projects (St. Louis 2). This indicates that the cities are valuing the publics' opinion and are willing to risk funding or current plans to ensure they engage residents.

**Commitment.** Finally, there is the value of commitment. As Kent and Taylor (2002) note, the organization must remain dedicated to dialogue and to achieving understanding with publics over the long term. In this, the focus must remain on the mutual benefits of the dialogue and not on winning or manipulating the other party. This is best achieved when both parties remain committed to interpretation and understanding (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Demonstrating commitment has a lot of similarities with the qualities of propinquity in that those cities that are committed to dialog and understand must then also participate in two-way communication and utilize platforms that facilitate that type of communication. This also means, as was found within the review of propinquity as a tenet, that the cities must use a variety of platforms to meet the needs of all residents. It is clear that the staff from these cities understand and value the importance of a conversation to achieve understanding with resident publics. A professional from St. Louis specifically stated, "We like public input. We like public questions, and we like being able to help people lead better lives" (St. Louis 1). A professional from Cleveland

shared this attitude, but also mentioned that it was a goal to get to that point and not something that they are effectively doing currently when they stated,

> Maybe they don't want a particular service that we've always done and we just didn't realize it because we never had the feedback to suggest that it wasn't effective or that it wasn't helpful. Now we have a lot more ability to see that. I think in Cleveland we're slowly coming around to realize that. I think once we get more people on board with that, we might be able to better encourage people to stay here, to move here, to visit here, more often. But we really need to come together collectively to understand that we can do this now and we're not reliant upon traditional media or traditional means of marketing our region or our city (Cleveland 1).

This is an important distinction; cities with higher levels of active citizenship are currently, and have been, engaging in conversations with publics, whereas cities with lower levels are just beginning or hope to do so in the future. This is important to note because cities are currently engaging publics and have also expressed an interest to continue doing more in the future – indicating that they are committed to dialogue for the long term. Further, professionals remain committed to this dialog despite challenges like diminished resources. Representatives from the cities of Detroit and Cleveland both spoke of the lack of resources to explore more communication options as much as they would like, or even as much as they felt they should have been doing and were now lagging behind one. One professional from Detroit expressed that "I'm sure that if money were not an object, we could do an even better job what our responsibility is" (Detroit 2).

The professional went on to explain that the lack of funding is not only an issue in the cost to communication, but in the level of staff they have to actually be communicating:

> When I first came to the city, which has been a little over 25 years ago, we were a booming department with 25 of us, 4-5 publicists and 4 graphic designers and 2 photographers. Now we're 7. So we do the best we can with what we have. Those cuts have just … It really has been in the last … We really got cut. The city went through a big layoff, a number of layoffs in 2005. Departments were just totally eliminated, and so our department was reduced. We moved out. At that time, there were 25 of us and we went down to about 10 and now we're down to 7 (Detroit 2).

Both of these challenges are imaginably true for all of the cities who are struggling with less taxpayers and a larger amount of blight that requires city services.

Commitment is the fifth and final tenet of dialogic communication presented by Kent and Taylor (2002). Upon reviewing all five tenets, it is clear that the communication behaviors of professionals in each of these cities can be considered dialogical. Further, that some activities, such as strategic staff, are actually *more* dialogical – meaning that they satisfy multiple tenets – and thus, may be having the most impact. A review of all these findings is presented in the next chapter.

**Comparing findings based on level of active citizenship.** Throughout the analysis of the interviews, there were at times more similarities between the responses and examples from professionals in Detroit and Cleveland, two cities with lower levels of active citizenship; and more similarities between St. Louis and Rochester, two cities with

higher levels of active citizenship. For example, it appeared through the process of

coding these interviews that officials from cities with higher levels of active citizenship

(as measured by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and

explained in the methods chapter) spoke about the things that *are* doing to combat this

image, while cities with lower levels of active citizenship spoke of what they *should be*

doing or what they *would like* to do in the future. This may be an indicator that the

communication practices employed by Rochester and St. Louis played a role in

establishing the higher levels of active citizenship observed in these communities.

Furthermore, in looking at this across the tenets of dialogic communication, the

general attitude of professionals in these cities may have differed slightly. Generally, all

of the professionals agreed on what *should be* happening, and those things can be aligned

with the five tenets, but it seemed to me as I was coding these interviews that the cities

with lower levels of active citizenship (i.e., Cleveland and Detroit) are not doing those

things as robustly. Further, those cities with low levels of active citizenship addressed

those shortcomings by explaining the challenges that all shrinking cities have faced. It is

possible, although untested within this research, that this perspective or attitude (i.e., the

sense of "we'd like to do more, but cannot given the challenges we face…") comes

across to residents through message framing – whether it be from the city as a whole or

through each individual (especially with understanding the value of using a grand

strategy to guide all communication from an organization). Hypothetically, an

organization, or a shrinking city in this case, could 'check the box' on every one of the

five tenets, but if the defeatist or defensive attitude comes across within the messages to

residents, it could still have an effect of discouraging active citizenship. In review of the five tenets outlined by Taylor and Kent for dialogism and subsequently dialogic theory, it is possible that message attitude could play an important role that has not yet be identified within the tenets, at least from the perspective of shrinking cities to resident publics.

**Chapter Four. Discussion**

At this point, one thing is very clear: the challenges within shrinking cities are not ones that can be easily overcome. This is truly a difficult situation and one where there are few historical success stories to draw from, especially within the industrial mid-section of the United States. Further, it is also clear that communication strategies alone will not resolve the problems, but, also, that a solution is not possible without effective communication either. Effective communication between governments and citizens is clearly a critical element in any rebuilding and revitalization effort and this is further demonstrated by the importance of active citizens within these communities. Government staff alone cannot turn around the decline that has happened in these shrinking cities; therefore, active citizens in the community play a critical role in reversing the trend.

The crucial nature of the government-citizen relationship thus underlines the value of the research questions in this study. How are professionals in shrinking cities working to build relationships and foster active citizen engagement around the goal of urban development and growth? To what extent can these practices be described as "dialogical"? And further, what challenges do these professionals face in building these relationships and foster active citizenship engagement? What strategies do they use to overcome these challenges?

Through the interviews, professionals in this study have made it clear that

residents are important to them and to the success of the city as a whole. They discussed

recognizing citizens as taxpayers and went on to explain that their job is to work *for* them

– to fulfill resident needs. Further, many discussed how active citizens, both as

individuals and as activist groups, play a critical role in revitalization. For example,

Detroit residents are being trained to identify and report blight, thus helping the

government to be more knowledgeable of the status of each neighborhood. Professionals

understand that communication forms important relationships with residents and that this

relationship becomes a partnership to create change and improve the community for all.

City professionals are using multiple communication tactics to build relationships

and to foster active citizenship. This is important to this study because it indicates

recognition that there is no single "golden" solution to fostering active citizenship.

Instead, cultivating active citizens likely requires a combination of multiple

communication tactics and strategies. In this way, Government staff members have not

abandoned the more traditional methods of communication for newer platforms, such as

social media. Instead, they are using more modern tactics to amplify the messages that

continue to be put out using traditional methods, such as press releases. Further, they

have found social media as an innovative way to amplify and expand upon the face-to-

face conversations that professionals from every city emphasized as the most valuable

way to engage residents.

However, using social media is not the only way they are engaging. Government

staff are incorporating communication with active citizens and encouraging their

participation across multiple "sites" in local governance, including in the planning process and through the establishment of neighborhood centers. By including residents in the planning process through public meetings where their ideas and concerns can be heard, professionals are building this relationship and sending a clear sign to residents that their opinions matter. This helps to strengthen that relationship. In addition, the placement of strategic staff at the district level throughout each of these cities helps to send a similar message to residents. Even more so, a physical presence in the neighborhood provides an opportunity for more frequent and informed dialogues to happen between city staff and residents.

The interviews with professionals also made clear that they have a clear and sober grasp of the economic and material challenges faced by their cities, as was evidenced by their lengthy accounts of vacant homes, high crime rates, along with failing infrastructures and services resulting from reduced finances. . All of the professionals from each of the subject cities fully agreed that there has been significant population loss within their city, and across the four cities, several challenges were commonly mentioned, including housing vacancy, high crime rates, limited city budgets, and a negative or 'blighted' image. Each of the cities has developed planning and redevelopment programs to help resolve these challenges, but all recognized that the challenges are complex and interconnected and noted there would be no quick fix for any of them.

These first-hand accounts thus described in rich detail about the challenges that shrinking cities face. The physical decline and population loss in these cities has created a

domino effect of problems that are not only intertwined and complicated but seem to amplify the negative effects of one another. Further, the interviewees acknowledge that there is not a simple solution or perfect formula for resolving these challenges. The rapid out-migration and population loss over the previous 50 years or more has led to an alarmingly high number of vacant lots which has led to increased crime and dilapidated properties, leading to even more residents moving out reducing the financial capabilities of the city even further and allowing infrastructure and government services to fall further into disrepair. All of this comes together to form the spiral of decline with one negative causing two more negatives. Professionals in these cities are easily able to provide examples of decline and the debilitating impact that it has had on the city.

At the same time, however, they are also able to provide examples of what is being done to overcome these challenges, and there are commonalities across all of the cities. First, professionals from these cities emphasized the importance of transparency in messaging explaining that not everything will work out the way it is intended and that there will be times when a residents are not pleased. Being transparent, admitting fault when appropriate and working together with the resident to find a solution are all not only common but important tactics in these cities. Second, the professionals in these cities discussed the power of strategic communication to aid combating the negative image of decline. Programs like Rochester's Clean Sweep or Detroit's Motor City Makeover have all had positive impacts on the community. These types of initiatives not only help to resolve some of the physical problems in the city, but they also provide an opportunity for the city to punctuate messages that they are working to make big changes.

Finally, programs like these help to cultivate active citizens by giving them an opportunity to participate in the improvement of the city. Cultivating active citizens is the third and final tactic that professionals in these shrinking cities are using to combat the challenges of being a shrinking city.

The final part of the first research question looks to how the practices of these professionals may be considered dialogical. Dialogic communication is focused on the *nature and direction* of the communication, *not just on the frequency* (Zhang & Seltzer, 2006). This means that the role of professionals to engage citizens through communication is increasingly important. Dialogic theory represents "a theoretical shift—from public relations reflecting an emphasis on managing communication to an emphasis on communication as a tool for negotiating relationships" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 23). Kent and Taylor presented mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk and commitment as five tenets by which dialogism can be measured. Using these tenets, the communication behaviors of the four subject cities, Rochester, St. Louis, Detroit and Cleveland were reviewed.

In analyzing how each of the cities are communicating with their resident publics, specifically according to the five tenets of dialogic communication we can begin to determine how these practices could be considered dialogical. Starting with *mutuality*, all participants agreed that they cannot function without the goodwill of residents, emphasizing this through discussions about residents being the taxpayers and indicating that they work directly for these residents. *Empathy* requires that the organization, or government in these cases, foster an environment of trust and support. For their part, the

professionals in these cities described a similar environment through the emphasis of transparency in communication which supports an empathetic, open and honest relationship where trust is a key facet. In addition, multiple informants discussed how deploying strategic staff to district-level offices was a strategy designed to build empathy, trust and support with residents.

Next, risk is a tenet of dialogic communication because, with in engaging in a dialogue (rather than a monologue), the organization takes on risk in valuing the public's opinions and taking steps to satisfy their needs. Professionals from the cities described the public forums that are integrated throughout the planning process. In these forums, government staff are opening themselves up to unknown requests, which may even be illogical or outside of the city's control. As one professional from Cleveland spoke of fielding many questions that had to be redirected to country or regional agencies. In short, the feedback from key publics may not always be good, and there is always the risk that the public will voice demands which are impractical or impossible to fulfill. In these situations of shrinking cities, the possibility of some endeavors is even more limited given the lack of funding and staff to support projects. In this regard, these professionals provided examples of taking risk by discussing moments where residents have come to request bike lanes or trails and the city took steps to implement those ideas. New ideas like these, which may seem increasingly common in many communities, have to be weighed in shrinking cities even more carefully. Allocating resources to these new, largely quality- of -life initiatives, may risk or even eliminate resources for other projects impacting safety or redevelopment. However, the dialogic tenet or risk indicates that it

may be precisely these risk-filled behaviors that are contributing to the growth of the dialogic relationship with residents.

While there are strong examples of how the professionals' communication with residents aligns with each of the tenets, finding a meaningful distinction between tenets was difficult at times. For instance, many examples offered by participants aligned with both propinquity and commitment at the same time. As discussed above, there were indeed a large number of examples that demonstrated propinquity, defined as frequent and spontaneous communication with residents. These examples include using multiple methods to communicate, particularly those that foster two-way communication. Further, professionals are using social media within these cities to amplify the communication that is already occurring through more traditional methods. Finally, as noted above, these professionals also discussed how strategic staff that are deployed across the city are able to frequently engage residents, often in a spontaneous manner, because they are geographically more accessible to residents.

At the same time, however, these instances where city officials are seeking out frequent and spontaneous conversations with citizens can also indicate commitment— that is, a long-term commitment to foster a citizen-government dialogue. Even in a financially challenged environment, the city government is demonstrating their commitment to communicating with residents by employing strategic staff and creating a physical office in neighborhoods for that dialogical communication to happen.

In the end, the professionals in these cities did not know that they were describing activities that aligned with the tenets of dialogic communication; they were simply

explaining their experiences as a government staff member in a shrinking city. However, when we take all of the examples and experiences that they provided and compare them to these five tenets, we can see that they are indeed working to communicate dialogically and form meaningful relationships with residents. Even more, when the professionals discussed not only the things that they are doing, but the things that they hope to do better or more of in the future, these plans and desires align with the five tenets as well. For example, the professionals in the city of Cleveland discussed wanted to expand the use of social media to be able to engage residents more frequently and casually – aligned with propinquity and empathy. And, professionals from St. Louis explained plans to incorporate more resident input into redevelopment plans for downtown.

Operating as a government representative in a shrinking city has many challenges; however, these professionals are working hard to overcome them. One of the most important ways is by fostering a relationship with residents and encouraging them to become more active, especially with regard to urban planning and redevelopment. Finally, in looking at these activities and the tactics that they are using to overcome these challenges, we can see that they are clearly dialogical and that is having a positive impact on both the relationship between professionals and residents and the community overall.

**Limitations**

As with any research project, there are limitations to the research presented in this thesis. The concepts of active citizenship, shrinking cities and dialogic communication are three major topics that span across many disciplines. In addition, these subject cities are very large organizations that communicate through multiple platforms and hundreds

of connections each day. Given that, the communication tactics and methods used by each of the subject cities are difficult to pinpoint and fully capture. Although this research intends to begin the conversation on this topic, it is certainly not comprehensive. The population size used for this initial study into this subject area is small, using only four cities and three professionals from each city. It is possible that any one of these twelve key subjects for research could have idiosyncratic perspectives and experiences, leading to incorrect conclusions. For this reason, no attempt should be made to generalize from the experiences of these city officials to make conclusions about how urban governments as a whole operate, or even how the leadership in these particular cities conceptualizes the role of communication.

This study investigated dialogic communication on a broad level through interviews with three government staff members from various offices. In order to fully understand and measure the level to which each city is communicating dialogically with residents a more comprehensive survey of all of the government staff would need to be conducted and then individual interviews would emphasize the statistical results of the survey. Further, information was not collected from residents to truly understand their perspective. In order to measure dialogic communication, one would need to also survey the other party in the relationship, the residents, to include both active and inactive residents.

At the same time, although small, a sample of this size is not unusual in qualitative research, and as discussed above, the patterns of discourse that emerged across these interviews were consistent. Furthermore, in line with the goals of interpretive

research, my objective was not to generalize from these interviews, but rather to describe in rich detail how these particular city officials understand their relationship to their city and the citizens they serve. I leave it to other researchers to judge if my interpretations of these officials' experiences and perspectives are transferable to other contexts and settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Further, the research presented here is representative of what each individual wanted to be portrayed through the interview. This includes perceptions about their representative city, the communication practices and guidance for staff within that city and about them as a professional, despite measures taken to maintain anonymity. Understanding this, participants may have been more inclined to share positive examples or discuss successful scenarios rather than adequately explaining a more realistic landscape. To this end, without an ethnographic study observing the communication behaviors of both professionals and residents and comparing this to outcomes there is not a way to definitively identify any missing factors or examples not discussed. Further, the research and findings presented here are limited to understanding each element on a spectrum. Each city can only be evaluated against the level of any communication practice of the others within the study. It can be identified that cities with more of a particular tenet appear to have more success and thus a relationship can begin to form, but this does not subsequently identify what is the perfect level of any one element. All of these items indicate the significant importance of future research.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The research presented in this thesis addresses a gap in the current communication, urban planning and political science research in that while each of the elements, active citizenship, shrinking cities and dialogic communication have been studied, and at time even with one of the other elements, there is very limited research on the intersection of these three elements. The preliminary findings here represent the start of an even larger conversation about the role of dialogic communication to foster active citizens that can then assist in reversing the negative impacts of shrinking cities. Because this is one of the few studies that address this three-way intersection, there are many opportunities for future research in this area.

This study was able to speculatively identify some differences in the communication behaviors of cities with high levels of active citizenship versus those with low levels of active citizenship; however the study of this relationship was certainly not exhaustive. Future studies should focus on a more extensive comparison of cities with high versus low levels of active citizenship. This relationship could also be investigated in growing cities, versus only those that are shrinking as was done in this study. Further, this study only leveraged interviews from city professionals and did not also collect the thoughts or opinions of residents or partner organizations. Future studies would help to expand the knowledge of the relationship between city government and active citizens by collecting information from these other sources. As the limitations of this study have identified future studies that investigate these phenomena on a larger scale would significantly advance the conversation. In addition, based on the findings here,

subsequent areas would be well suited for more detailed research and analysis. First, case studies of where a change in the level of active citizenship has been identified would be valuable. This could be especially valuable if these studies investigated the need for active citizenship to be prioritized within the city's grand strategy and strategy, instilling the promotion of active citizenship as a top priority for all city staff. Further, literature indicates that dialogue can be incorporated into organizational public relations at the interpersonal, mediated (often through technology), and organizational levels. Studies that investigate the implementation of the five tenets at each of these levels could help to identify more practical recommendations for shrinking cities. Third, there is an aspect of this research that relates to the use of various platforms and channels to communication. Additional research into the return on investment for each of these methods would be very valuable to shrinking cities. This research specific to shrinking cities could be expanded or extrapolated to investigate the differences when applied to cities recovering from disaster or major metropolitan cities in general. The most important thing is that research not end here, because the value of rescuing the shrinking cities and creating better communities for the residents within them is significant.

**Appendices**

Table 2.   Analysis of Dialogic Communication on Shrinking City Websites

| Measure of Dialogic Elements | Detroit | Cincinnati | Cleveland | St. Louis | Rochester | Pittsburgh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Element 1. Ease of Interface** | | | | | | |
| Site map present | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Major links to rest of site | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Search engine box | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Element 2. Usefulness to Visitor** | | | | | | |
| Statement of philosophy | | | | | | ✓ |
| How to participate | | | | ✓ | | |
| Links to political leaders | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Logo of organization is prominent | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Element 3. Conservation of Visitors** | | | | | | |
| Important information is available | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Short loading time (<4 s) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Posting of last updated time and date | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| **Element 4. Return Visit Encouragement** | | | | | | |
| Explicit invitation to return | | | | | | |
| News forums | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| FAQ's or Q&A's | | | ✓ | | | |
| Bookmark now | | | | | ✓ | |
| Links to other Web sites | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Calendar of events | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Downloadable information | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Requestable information | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| News items posted w/in last 30 days | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| **Element 5. Dialogic Loop** | | | | | | |
| Opportunity for user-response | | | | | ✓ | |
| Opportunity to vote on issues | | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Survey to voice opinion on issues | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Offers regular information | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

**Appendix 2.   Analysis of Potential Case City Websites**

      **City of Detroit, Michigan.** The City of Detroit had a well organized and simply designed website that was both aesthetically pleasing and easy to understand. Major links to key pages that a resident could be seeking are available surrounding the primary graphic. This related to the high rating for both ease of interface and conservation of visitors. The website included some generally useful information and provided prominent links to current city initiatives; however, some of these links were broken and led to an error page. The website featured 20 spotlighted stories at the center of the upper portion of the main page. These rotating stories highlighted major accomplishments within the city and changes happening to the community, especially new commercial developments and economic partnerships that had been made. This feature indicated that combating the negative image of a shrinking city was a high priority and that it was a key element of the communication strategy.

      However, the City of Detroit website rated extremely poorly in the dialogic loop measures and in communicating for active citizenship. There was not even a "contact us" link or any contact information on the main page. Together, this indicated that the City of Detroit was using the website to communication strategically, but not dialogically.

      **City of Cincinnati, Ohio.** The City of Cincinnati website was very simple in design and calm in color, using muted blues and grays for the palette. Similar to Detroit, the site provided basic links around a central graphic that featured revolving stories of community activity. Although there was no site map, the search engine and major links

were easy to locate and understand. The site loaded without delay and the simple design allowed the visitor to navigate around the site quickly. Also, the site provided recent news and announcements with dates and links to read more. The design and content did well to publish information that the government felt was important. The "contact us" link at the top center of the pages provided a comprehensive directory with phone numbers, email and physical addresses, but it did not actively seek or encourage input from the visitor. Additionally, the site did not address Cincinnati's status as a shrinking city or encourage active citizenship. There were no clear indicators of the city's larger communication strategy.

**City of Cleveland, Ohio.** Unlike the clean and simple designs of both Detroit and Cincinnati, Cleveland's website was a loud change. At first scroll, there was a mash-up of links and ideas, all mixed within dark, but patriotic, red, white and blue colors. Upon searching through all of the busyness, there was a comprehensive amount of information, including links to departments, political leaders and other important contacts. Within a list of announcements was a call for volunteers to assist with the Mayor's Holiday Food Basket Give-Away, which certainly tied to providing opportunities for active citizenship. However, beyond this one seasonal bullet, there was no encouragement for residents to get involved, much less a dialogic loop. There was also no mention of shrinking cities and no theme to the communication to indicate a particular communication strategy.

**City of St. Louis, Missouri.** In stark contrast to the dark colors of the Cleveland website, the St. Louis website had a white background with gray and yellow clean lines. Major links lined the top bar of the page with highlighted articles about current events

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and initiatives at the center and right sidebar. Of particular interest, the two main features on the page both called for citizen feedback and involvement. Further, the lower half of the homepage included calendars for public meetings and community events. The homepage also featured a listing of the most active pages within the website, which was a smart way of leveraging technology to facilitate information sharing and perhaps to lead to dialogue. There was no mention of the challenge that St. Louis, as a shrinking city, was facing, but the emphasis on both active citizenship and a dialogic loop made this an interesting city for the future research.

**City of Rochester, New York.** In studying a dialogic approach and creating active citizenship, the City of Rochester website was a refreshing change from some of the others analyzed for this project. As was common with many of the other websites, the City of Rochester site featured a central graphic surrounded with major links to important pages. However, of the six stories featured there, three were invitations to community events (a holiday lighting, a community market and a park groundbreaking) while the other three were invitations to participate in stakeholder surveys. The graphic featured statements such as "We value your opinion," "How can we serve you better?" and "Your Neighborhood. Your Projects. Voice of the Citizen." Both active citizenship and dialogic communication were clearly part of the City of Rochester's communication strategy. There was no mention of combating the challenges of shrinking cities, although the department of neighborhood and business development was featured in one of the main sections of the homepage. This dramatic contrast from the other cities' communication strategies indicated that further study of Rochester would be valuable.

**City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.** The City of Pittsburgh website was a clean,

blue and white design, similar to many of the others evaluated. It also featured major

links across the masthead of the homepage and a graphic showcasing multiple stories on

a rotational basis. In general, the website was easy to read and navigated quickly;

however, the amount of information on the homepage was significantly less than that of

the others, causing visitors to have to click through multiple pages to find what

information they need – including contact information. The homepage did have an

interesting "Ask PGH" feature in place of a site search and showcased the Pittsburgh 311

service that residents could call for information about city services. While a good start,

these items did not complete the dialogic loop. In addition, the website did not address

active citizenship or shrinking cities.

**Appendix 3.   Interview Question Guide**

- What role do you play in the government?

- What are some of the key messages that the city communicates with residents?

- What tools do you use to communicate with residents?

- Who are the primary communicators with residents, on behalf of the city?

- Are active citizens important to the government?

- What, if anything, can the government do to help citizens become more active?

- What, if anything, is being done to encourage citizens to be active in the community?

- Can you think of a particular example of active citizens working on projects or initiatives within the city?

- Are citizens being incorporated into the planning and development processes within your city?

- According to the US Census Bureau, the major cities within the US and around the world have been losing central city population for the past several years... the "Shrinking City". Is this something that the city government is focused on?

- As a government, what are some of the challenges that you have noticed from this population shift away from central cities?

- What activities are the government engaged in to reverse this trend?

- Studies have shown that this population shift can cause negative city images – directly and indirectly. Is combating the negative image of decline part of the overall communication strategy?

- What are the challenges in doing this?

- What initiatives have you engaged in (or are currently engaged in) which are designed to respond to any negative images associated with your city?

- What is the most important thing that I should know about your city with regard to communication and citizens?

- Anything else that I should know before we end?

**Appendix 4.   Interview Transcript: Cleveland 1**

Employee:    Employee.

Christi:    Hello?

Employee:    Hi.

Christi:    Hi, this is Christi.

Employee:    Hi, how are you?

Christi:    Good. How are you?

Employee:    I'm well.

Christi:    Good. Thank you so much for agreeing to do this. This is a huge

help to me.

Employee:    No problem. Don't mind at all.

Christi:    Good.

Employee:    Makes me feel important and needed.

Christi:    Good. You probably noticed when you dialed in, but I'm doing this

for my thesis and so I have to record them, so that I can then transcribe them and

compare them. Are you okay with that?

Employee:    Yep, absolutely.

Christi:    Okay. Can I get your email address and I'll email you our consent

form?

Employee:    Sure. It's XXX@XXX.com.

Christi:        Perfect. We're not sure if she explained much about what I'm doing, but I thought I'd just give you a little background, so that you know where I'm coming from.

Employee:      Yes.

Christi:        I'm currently in a graduate program. My undergraduate degree is in urban planning and development. I'm now in a graduate program for strategic communication and PR, so I'm trying to look at how cities are communicating with their residents in all sorts of different ways and I'm kind of trying to tie those urban planning challenges that a lot of major cities are having with central city population shifts. The population is shifting out from the central city and into more suburban areas.

Employee:      Grand.

Christi:        So that's what I've been looking at and Cleveland is one of the 4 cities that I'm doing interviews at. The others are Detroit, St Louis and Rochester, New York. [inaudible 00:05:27] give you a little background on what I'm working at, but I thought if we could just take 15 minutes, I've got a couple of key questions here and then see what you have to say and give me your input.

Employee:      Sounds good.

Christi:        Great. What role are you in within the City of Cleveland?

Employee:      I actually just changed roles, so I can speak to both or 1? Whichever is more convenient for you? I was with Cleveland Public Safety and Emergency Management up until December and in January; I started here at Cleveland Public Utilities, which is water, sewer and public power.

Christi:        Okay. Were you in a communication role with Public Safety as well?

Employee:    Yes, definitely.

Christi:        Well then it's kind of like I'm getting a double hitter here, so that's good.

Employee:    Hopefully I can provide some good information for you.

Christi:        In general, what are the key messages that Cleveland tries to use when they communicate with their residents?

Employee:    The message changes obviously based on the situation and the needs and the audience. If we're speaking with residents ... Being part of the public sector, it's very important for us to communicate the services that are available, the services we provide, whether they're every day or emergency oriented. There's also a public education component that we need to provide to our residents. Just for example, from the Cleveland Water side, which actually goes beyond the city itself; it goes into the suburbs as well and actually into several counties.

               From the water side, during the winter months in the extreme cold, the polar vortex, we had a lot of feedback and customer service calls for ultimately frozen pipes in the home, which we can't help with. That's something you need to do for your own home or your own residence. We needed to communicate how they could protect themselves and their pipes, how they could protect their homes from further damage, what it meant, how to get help. It wasn't as much about ... Well, it was. It was about the

services that we can and do provide and the services we can't provide and also the public education piece on how you can help yourself.

I feel in public service, there's a lot of "Here's what we can and are doing. Here's what we need you to do to help yourself" kind of a thing. On the sewer side over here, there's a big component for conserving and protecting the environment. "Only rain down the storm drain" kind of messaging, where "You can help lowering your own rates. You can help protect our infrastructure. You can help conserve our natural resources and protect the environment." There's a lot of public education there as well. Does that help? Is that kind of what you was getting at?

Christi:        Yes, definitely.

Employee:      From the safety side, I would say it's probably the same as well. Just for example, "Change your clocks. Change your batteries in your smoke detectors." There's the public education component there, but there's also the "We're going to be here to fight the fire, but we need you to make sure you have a working smoke detector and you're testing it and so on and so forth."

Christi:        Interesting. Are there specific tools that you use that you've found to be successful or not successful when you're communicating with them? Like different platforms?

Employee:      Absolutely. Cleveland is probably not unlike the other cities that you're looking at. We have a large contingency of folks that are online on mobile devices, and so we need to bring in the social media side, including the visual communications aspect, but we have a lot of socioeconomically challenged, we have a lot of older

unemployed, a lot of folks that we can't communicate with in that way, so we still have our more traditional means. We still need word of mouth, public address type for like some of the safety side, from an emergency standpoint. In a house explosion or something, we're knocking door to door still.

Really, our role as communicators has shifted greatly not just with the internet and social media, but just in the sense that there are many more facets to our audiences than there were before. From the emergency management side, we had to look at how do we communicate with special populations or access and functional needs populations, people who don't speak English and are they part of a community or are they more interspersed throughout a diverse community? Like Asia Town versus just a couple of folks who speak a language in a certain neighborhood, that's not really an entire community of that language. A great deal of caveats that didn't use to be there.

Christi:        Sure. Interesting.

Employee:     I'm kind of all over the board right now. I'm sorry.

Christi:        No, this is great. You had talked a little bit about the partnership between what the city can offer and getting those residents to take some responsibility and actions on their own part and that's kind of a second piece that I'm working on, so that's particularly interesting to me is how citizen involvement within the context of the community and can change kind of how that government exists. Can you talk to the value that the city puts on the having citizens engaged in the government process?

Employee:     Absolutely. I think just overall that's been something that government has always strived to be, to get people engaged. I think the difference is now

... And something that we are maybe a little slow to adapt to ... Is that we have avenues now to do that ourselves. We have avenues now, via social media and all of the new mediums and tactics that we have out there now, to engage people directly. Part of that, though, is monitoring and listening to what people are saying, to understanding where that's coming from and then acting on it and taking that minute to engage them, whether you were part of that conversation or you're basically butting into somebody else's conversation.

It's funny that we talk to today on St Patrick's Day. In Cleveland, St Patrick's Day is by far ... The parade is by far our biggest event. It is not unheard of for Cleveland to double its population on St Patrick's Day. I think it was 2 or 3 years ago, we had 80 degree weather and there were more than half a million people downtown in addition to the people that live and work downtown. That's a big deal for us. We had to really adapt and think about who are these people and how are we reaching them? We're not going to reach them during the middle of the parade if something happens or just to get them traffic information or to put out an alert about a missing kid.

We're not going to reach them via sending a press release or via traditional media. We needed to make sure we were mobile because that's where they were going. We needed to insert ourselves into a conversation that was already happening, meaning the St Patrick's Day ... People posting pictures of themselves celebrating and things like that, so it wasn't a conversation that we were actively involved in, but we needed to insert ourselves there. We're working more in that direction. I think we are just overall slower

to adapt than maybe the private sector is, but we're getting there, and I think our audiences are getting there as well. We're starting to see more people engage with us.

When the 3 young ladies were discovered in Cleveland last May, I think that changed a lot for us. I was part of that situation because I was in safety then. Obviously our numbers jumped, just in terms of social media and people paying attention to us, but it brought attention to the fact that we were out there and people could engage with us. Those types of emergencies and situations, while bittersweet, can do a lot to help us engage. Does that help?

Christi:       Yeah, that's really interesting. Have you seen, in either of your roles, citizens becoming engaged in the planning and development processes within the city?

Employee:     I think it's slow, but I do think it happens. I think people are much more aware of community meetings and things like that, so then they do get more involved. It's sort of a slow-moving effort. It certainly beats having to put out flyers and pepper the neighborhood with this community meeting or this beach cleanup or ... I can't think of any other examples, but "This event is going on." It certainly does help that we can reach directly the people we serve now. Even if they don't participate in person or get involved actively doing something, at least they're part of a conversation now. At least they're coming to the table and having opinions whether negative or positive. At least they're attentive. I think there's a lot more people moving from inattentive to attentive, but it's a slow shift.

Christi:        Interesting. I mentioned a little bit about the population shift and how that's kind of trending across the US. Is that something that you folks in Cleveland have been paying attention to and trying to communicate to?

Employee:       You know what? Being in my position, it's not something I can really comment a great deal on. I know that there is certainly data that suggests that that's the case. I did work a couple of years in the mayor's office, but I'm looking at it more from several layers down. I'm looking at more specifically in terms of the departments that I work for. I will say though that especially moving from safety over here to [inaudible 00:18:10] utilities, where water serves 1.4m people across North East Ohio and several counties, I have realized just how much the urban center culture and the communication that we provide affects the greater region, if that makes any sense.

Just because I work for the City of Cleveland doesn't mean that when I speak, I'm speaking only to Cleveland residents. I grew up in the suburbs, but when I moved away to Chicago for 8 years, I always said I was from Cleveland. It didn't matter that I had never lived actually in the city at that point. People still identify it, so when we speak, we really need to speak to a broader audience than just the people that we serve.

Also, having an urban center where there's a great deal of business and industry, we have a large number of commuters and we have to communicate with them just as much as we have to communicate with our residents. They're here 40+ hours a week, so certainly on the emergency side; we need to be able to communicate with them. Even on the non-emergency side, like traffic or missing children or amber alert kind of

situations ... We still need to get that information out to them, even though they're not our residents.

Christi:        Okay. Yeah. That's awesome. I didn't realize you had lived in Chicago. That's actually where I grew up.

Employee:    Yah. I was born there and then I went back there.

Christi:        I live in DC now, so I don't have to deal with the cold weather, like you guys have to.

Employee:    Where did you live when there were there? Where you grew up?

Christi:        In Batavia, like the Western Burbs.

Employee:    Yeah.

Christi:        I'm looking to my list here. I'm curious if there's anything, now that you kind of know what I'm looking at and the different topics I'm trying to find some connections between them, if there's anything that kind of stands out in your mind that I should know or be thinking about.

Employee:    I guess the one thing I would say ... And this is something I'm sort of passionate about, which might be why I was [inaudible 00:20:52] to speak with you. The way that we communicate obviously has shifted, so the role of people who do marketing and communications and community relations, community policing. All of those roles have really become much more prominent in the public sector organization than they ever were in the past. Maybe community relations was the same. I can't really speak to that because I don't do that directly, but really it used to be you had a press

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secretary. The mayor had a press secretary or the governor had a press secretary and maybe there were a few other people that supported them, but that was really it.

Now the task has grown so much and there's so much that affects the type of service, the amount of service, the quality of the service that you can provide as a public sector agency, just based on our ability to listen to what people are saying. You can go online now and see people posting about all the snow and ice where they live or where they're driving at that moment ... Not that we like them to text and drive, but let's face it, they do it. So you can look and see "Wow, we've got a problem in this area. We can immediately dispatch someone out there and say 'Yeah, this is really bad. We didn't realize just how bad it was'."

There's a lot more that we can provide, which I think is encouraging for urban centers because typically urban centers have the resources to be able to do that. Whereas, in the smaller communities, like where I grew up, they would already know that was happening just because the community was so small. They could already provide that service because you kind of knew everyone in your community. If you were the fire chief, you knew everybody, but you can't necessarily know everybody when you're in a big city. Now, we have the ability to maybe be more in touch than we used to, so I think we can use that. We can maximize our efforts then to really provide better service, better quality service, and more service.

Maybe people don't want to see ... I can't even think of an example. Maybe they don't want a particular service that we've always done and we just didn't realize it because we never had the feedback to suggest that it wasn't effective or that it wasn't

helpful. Now we have a lot more ability to see that. I think in Cleveland we're slowly

coming around to realize that. I think once we get more people on board with that, we

might be able to better encourage people to stay here, to move here, and to visit here

more often. But we really need to come together collectively to understand that we can do

this now and we're not reliant upon traditional media or traditional means of marketing

our region or our city.

Just, again, an example of St Pat's. A couple of years ago, all the folks that

were involved came together and said "All right. This is the hashtag we're going to use.

This is all the people that are involved." So we've really started doing that more on a

regional level, believe it or not, even though the event happens downtown. The suburbs

[inaudible 00:25:01]. More people are involved. We're not there yet, but there's certainly

more people that are jumping on board than it used to be, where it was more sporadic

efforts.

If you wanted to market the region somehow or market the city somehow,

like the Convention and Visitors Bureau, you really had to sit down and actively engage

people in this whole marketing campaign and pay thousands of dollars and really try to

communicate with a broad-based monster effort of kiosk posters and flyers and emails

and newsletters and brochures and what not. Now, we can supplement that much faster

and reach much more of our audience than we ever could before.

I think slowly we're hopefully start to see people who are more engaged,

have more ownership in the city that they live in or that they work in and hopefully stop

some of that sprawl, if you will ... Not that's necessarily a bad thing, but just want to make sure our urban centers are strong.

Christi:          Right, right. I agree.

Employee:     I don't know if I'm making any sense. It's Monday afternoon.

Christi:          No, this is perfect. This is perfect. This is really great. It's been interesting. I'm actually an urban planner for the federal government in my regular job, so this has been interesting to come under...

Employee:     I'm teaching a FEMA class tomorrow.

Christi:          Interesting.

Employee:     Yeah, just a basic public information officer class I'm teaching.

Christi:          Nice.

Employee:     Sort of for the feds, sort of not.

Christi:          Right. This has been perfect. I think I have everything that I need. Thanks again for agreeing to call in and do this, especially at such last minute notice.

Employee:     No problem.

Christi:          All right. Thank you much.

Employee:     All right. Take care and let me know how it turns out.

Christi:          Yes, definitely. I'll shoot you an email too, so then you'll have my information anyway and we can kind of stay in touch.

Employee:     Sounds good.

Christi:          Okay.

Employee:     Okay. Bye bye.

Christi:        Bye.

**Appendix 5.   Interview Transcript: Cleveland 2**

>> Good morning. This is EMPLOYEE.

>> Hi Employee, this is Christy.

>> Hi, how are you?

>> Doing good.  How are you?

>> I'm doing well.  Thank you.

>> Good, good.  I thank you so much for agreeing to chat with me for a few minutes this morning.

>> Oh, my pleasure.

>> It's really gonna help me out.  So I think she's maybe had a [INAUDIBLE] when she hope connected us instead of disappointment but I'm doing these interviews for my graduate studies for my thesis.  So I'm going to record it so that I can then transcribe and compare.  Are you okay with that?

>> Yes, that's fine.  Okay, okay, so I just have a few questions, it should only take about 15 minutes or so, what I've been looking at my undergraduate degree is in urban planning and that's what I've worked in for the past Several years and now I'm going back to school to get a master in communication and PR.

>> Okay.

>> And so I'm really been looking at how city governments are communicating with their residents and set.

>> Um-hm.

>> Relationship there. So that's where a lot of my questions are focus on right now.

>> Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about your role in the, in the city government?

>> Sure, I lead communications for Mayor Jackson and the Jackson administration, so that involves, media relations, Public relations, crisis communications we do some web content, social media. Events either planning them for the mayor or staffing him out at public events or private events even. Employee communications. Oversee the city's cable access station and our photographers.

>> Great. Great. In general when you're communicate with you residents, what are some of the key messages that you keep in your back pocket?

>>Well overall is, is Mayor Jackson's goal of improving the quality of life and standard of living for everybody in Cleveland. We talk a lot about the city's bottom line being service, not profit so our focus is on service delivery. In addition, we add to that one of the tools to get us there to increase quality of life is building a sustainable economy creating jobs in the local economy, as well as opportunities for local businesses to grow and succeed. And finally, the third main point we focus on is improving the quality of education for every child in Cleveland.

>>Great, great. Have you found any particular tools to be more or less helpful when you're communicating with residents?

>> With residents, the most effective tool that, that we have our eh, for this particular mayor anyway, our community meetings, town hall style meetings. And fall

closely behind that is our cable access station. It's targeted directly towards Cleveland residents and we have good success there.

>> Great. Interesting.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Have you had much involvement with trying to get citizens to become active within the government processes?

>>To an extent, yes. We host, either the mayor's office, or throughout the city, the different departments and divisions. We host a lot of community events. Whether they are meetings on road construction projects or public information sessions regarding healthcare in the city, or job opportunities for teenagers. So we do a lot of public events to try and bring people in and have direct conversations with them.

> Okay. Have you seen residents respond positively to those situations? Or can you think of an example where that kind of took off into something where residents took ownership of an issue?

>> Taking ownership of an issue? One, one area is in our cycling community. We've had a pretty strong increase in the number of cyclists within the city, whether they're commuting to work or school or for recreation. We went out and had a number of community meetings and engaged Kind of the activists in the cycling community, and then use their input to create plan to command our cycling network. So, improve biking amenities on our roads, whether they're dedicated bike lanes or other Facilities to accommodate cyclists. So it's been a very engaged process with that particular community in Cleveland.

>> Okay. Great, that's great.

>> Mm-hm.

>> So me as a planner I've been looking at some of the trends kind of across the US and one of the things that major metropolitan areas have struggled with recently. Kind of globally more so than even just in the US, there's, there's population shifts out of the central city area and into the more suburban

>> Mm-hm

>> areas and,

>> Mm-hm.

>> Then looking at some of the challenges that that creates for a city government. Have you noticed some of those challenges when you're trying to communicate with residents?

>>yes. [LAUGH] We've had we most definitely, what has happened in Cleveland over the last several decades. I will say that we have a number of, of neighborhoods within the city that are actually growing, and we're actually drawing people back in suburban areas. But overall we've had population loss in the city and the county area population has stayed pretty much the same. So that means people are leaving the city and moving out into the suburbs. Com, [INAUDIBLE] from a communications standpoint you know, particularly we've noticed on social media that Many of our follower or people that we interact with, whether on Facebook or Twitter or or on our blog, are not actually city residents. So they're weighing in, providing feedback on city services. Some of them are users if they're visiting the city for any reason, but But it the

interactions not as strong amongst city residents themselves. So that's been a particular challenge.

>> Interesting. Have you have you felt like you've started to Some of the cities I've been talking with have felt like that population shift has caused other, kind of marketing issues for tourism or, for attracting new residents or businesses. Is that something that you've been engaged in?

>>yes, it's definitely a conversation here. Cleveland as a whole sometimes, particularly by the national media, has been viewed as a, we're kind of like the poster child for what is going wrong in urban centers. [LAUGH] Whether it's foreclosure Crisis, how, you know, abandonment of housing, population loss. So it is something that is part of the, the basic conversation in the Cleveland community. And it's addressing that Issue is part of what I work with our economic development people, our city planning people our community development people. On because we of course want to strengthen our neighborhood. Attract more people attract more visitors so You know, we believe if we provide these course services as well as, you know, improve education and, and neighborhood amenities will be able to turn that trend around.

>> Okay. Good, good. This is its hugely helpful for me.

>> Good, I'm glad. [LAUGH] Have you noticed, in general, like what's the greatest barrier to communicating with residents? Or, one of the biggest challenges that you've had?

>> Mm-hm. What I think, particularly in Cleveland over the last year, we've had a big shift in our media market. Shift away from our major daily newspaper and that I

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think has had an impact. There are so many sources for daily news and breaking news.

That it's much harder to target really our our residents, and our broader constituents, but but residents in particular. They can get news anywhere [LAUGH] from any source and our local media has has shifted into a much they move much faster now than ever before.

Meaning that they will post the story about Eh, at the beginning when, you know, they're hearing that something is happening in the city. And this is particularly for breaking news or crisis kind of situations. You know, they don't take the time to validate the situation. So, residents often, you know, first impressions are pretty big and stick with you. So they hear the first part and never hear the follow-up that explains really what's going on. So that just kind of just, the multitude of channels is really one of the biggest challenges. So we've been working to try and increase our own presence through our, through social media and our website. Help become really the force for information for our city presence.

>> Okay. Great. That covers most of kind of my questions but I was curious now that you know what I'm looking at and where I'm interested in. Is there anything that comes to mind that you think I should. Know about Cleveland or about communication or, anything.

>> Gosh [LAUGH]

>> I know that's a really open question.

>> Yeah pretty open. I think just overall and where. Public administration, urban planning, and, and communications meet. I think I think the trend moving forward is to be very data driven. You know, this kind of gets to that issue that issue that I was

mentioning with the num, the, just the sheer volume of Channels to get information.  I

think, I think that we'll be able to use data more and more, in terms of what the city is

doing to really hone our message, messages and make them sharper and clearer.  But then

also try and pull the data out of the people that are interacting with us to better target our

messages.  I think that's going to be a trend that local governments really, really follow

over the next couple of years.

&gt;&gt;  Okay, yeah that's [COUGH] some great insight.  I guess last can I get your

email address and then if I have any other follow up questions I can shoot you an email

and we can get in touch that way?

&gt;&gt;  Oh, absolutely.  Sure, it's XXXX Excellent.  Okay.

&gt;&gt;  Okay.

&gt;&gt;  Well, that covers things for me.  Thank you again for taking the time to come.

&gt;&gt;  You're welcome.  Well, best of luck with your thesis.

&gt;&gt;  Okay, thanks.

&gt;&gt;  Mm-hm.  Bye-bye.  [SOUND]

**Appendix 6.   Interview Transcript: Cleveland 3**

Employee:     Employee.

Speaker 2:     Hi Employee, is that you?

Employee:     Yes, it is.

Speaker 2:     Thanks for switching over.

Employee:     No problem.

Speaker 2:     I officially have to check first and see if you're okay with me recording the conversation so that I can use it for transcribing later.

Employee:     That's fine.

Speaker 2:     Like most graduate projects I'm not using your name in anything or any of that. Just for me to [inaudible 00:06:32] it so I can compare.

Employee:     Sounds good.

Speaker 2:     I guess to start of a little bit on my interest and where and what I'm hoping to learn is that my undergraduate degree is in Urban Planning and now I'm going back to school almost a decade later for my Masters in Communication and PR. I've been really interested in how cities communicate with their residents and trying to encourage residents to become more active and engaged within city processes. That's what I'm focused on. I've got a handful of questions here. I guess to start us off can you tell me a little bit about your role within the city of Cleveland?

Employee:     Sure. I'm the Chief of Public Affairs for the City of Cleveland's Department of Public Utilities. In that respect I'm in-charge for communications,

marketing, government affairs, and strategic planning for the Department of Public Utilities, which has three operational divisions or utilities. The smallest of the three is the Division of Water Pollution Control, which is a … We've got a sewer transport utility. We don't treat waste water but we move it from homes and businesses to treatment centers because our regional entity does the actual treatment.

We have Cleveland Public Power, which is ... its [inaudible 00:08:02] an electric service that services about three quarters of the City of Cleveland. It's a little bit of a unique entity because we actually have door-to-door competition with an investor on utility, so that introduces some unique challenges both from an operational and a communication standpoint. Then probably the bulk of our time and energy is spent on the Cleveland Water, which is the regional potable water supplier to about 1.5 million people. It spreads across 72 different communities, I believe, and parts of five counties. I think we're the eight largest water system in the United States.

I get a little bit of a different perspective than I think the other folks you're going to talk to today who deal with kind of a more general fond approach. I know Maureen's more ... she deals with everything in the city and then I think you might be talking with Jay Skapinsky over to the council, they obviously deal with everything in the city but we're pretty uniquely focused on public utilities here.

Speaker 2:	Interesting. When you're messaging to residents what are some of the common messages or key messages that you try and get out?

Employee:	It really depends for us on which of the utilities that we're talking about because each one has its own unique structure and challenges. We have to be a

little bit thoughtful about which message we're going to push to which audience. For example, when we're dealing with our electric utility and a lot of instances we are looking at ... very heavily focused on customer contact because we are in a competitive environment. We do need to attract and retain customers so our messaging tends to focus more on our product and on our service itself.

When we're dealing with Cleveland Waters, to a less extent water pollution control, what we need to think about is we're not in a competitive environment, so how do we generate interests and concern or engagement in any way in terms of the product that we deliver.

Water tends to be probably one of the most taken for granted utilities that you'll find because people turn the tap, the water comes out and they don't give you a whole lot of thought. From a communication standpoint that can be a challenge because most folks they only think about you or interact with you when they have a problem.

Speaker 2: Interesting. When you've been kind of getting these messages or these different types of interactions have you found any tools or platforms that are more successful than others?

Employee: We are ... I guess it's probably not the way you described it. We're behind the curve in terms of making use of some of the newer, and at this point not even newer but emerging platforms for communication with it. I took this job about two years ago and we were coming off of, particularly on the water side some pretty customer service issues.

We had to spend a significant chunk of the first two years in this ... that I've been in this role focused on fixing customer service problems which haven't given us a tremendous amount of flexibility to think about particular platforms and leveraging some of the more effective ways of engagement and communication, some of the social media stuff ... We finally just rebuilt our website about six months ago.

We've been operating on the same website for about seven years. It was pretty dated, it didn't support what we needed it to do. We weren't able to share information with customers. The fact that we threw it, so we had to step back and do that and now we're in a position we're we can start to push a little more aggressively into some of those other emerging technologies that we haven't been able to get to just yet.

I think if we would look into our portfolio now, the most effective mechanism we have to communicate with customers is the bill, because everybody gets one and pretty much everybody opens it. If you can put some messaging on the bill or in the bill as an insert it's always ... probably a reasonable effective way for us communicate based on the way we're set up now.

Speaker 2:     Do you think that ... Have you heard residents requesting for you to expand into these other areas?

Employee:     You know we don't get a huge push right now on the ... particularly on the water side from customers to expand in any direction one way or the other. What we tend to see in here is that there's very little ... Right now what we're not very effective at is the pro-active communications. We tend to respond very well when

customers call us. We've got our call center times down to a reasonable time period. We respond very quickly when we have a water main break and those sort of things.

We need to push into the pro-active communications a little bit stronger and I think it becomes one of those issues of customers and folks who are interested in us, not really realizing that they're interested in us, so we have to generate the interest and the awareness on our own, which is a good thing but it's also a challenge.

Speaker 2:     Right, that's a really interesting way to explain that. I'm trying to look at my list here.

A lot of communities have to deal with challenges that arise from a myriad of different things, so one of my interests is how city governments are communicating with their stakeholders in response to  a negative situation. What are some general tactics that you're trying to guide yourself by if you're in a situation like that?

Employee:     I think in a lot of instances ... I guess you can break them into two groups of things ... Well, three groups of things, one where whoever is communicating ... Because there's some stimulus out to the general public that causes them to be interested in an issue. If we're looking at ... for example ... I'm trying to think of some examples off the top of my head and I'm blanking on it right now but something has caused these folks to become interested in this. If the triggering mechanism is factually correct and you just made a mistake and something is wrong. It goes ... It's that old lesson that honesty is the best policy, you just say, "We messed up."

An example we sent a customer a $14,000 water bill last week or two weeks ago and that obviously hit the newspapers because it should be about $200. In that

sense we made a mistake and we corrected it. We fixed it. We learned from it. We're looking at our processes and you  acknowledge those things and you just take responsibility for it. You can try to dance around it and get away from it but it just damages your own credibility long-term if you're doing that. When you make mistakes you just have to own up to it and say, 'We made a mistake."

There are some instances however where the information is presented publicly and it's not ... it's either not correct or it's out of context. In that sense we want to be pretty clear in getting the facts correct and the context's specific information out there. We'll either work with the reporter who did the story, we'll reach out to the suburban mayors and the water system who may have been impacted by this to really try to set the records straight and try to make sure that the factual information is out there and the people are getting that.

The other issue we deal with here is going to be an issue of public confidence and you have to take the steps necessary to maintain public confidence particularly in the water system. In a lot of instances things from external can cause you to have to react and have some communications prepared to deal with those. For example, we had George Mason, so that's Virginia, right?

Speaker 2:     Yes.

Employee:     I don't know how cold it's been in Virginia but we had a couple periods where our wind chills drop down to about -40 and on-

Speaker 2:     Right, I grew up in Chicago, from ... familiar from my family of the Vortex.

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Employee:    There you go the Polar Vortex, exactly. The water system just to our immediate west ... We draw our water from Lake Erie. There are intakes, they draw up the raw water in to be treated froze, so they weren't able to bring water into their system. They started to have water shortages and had to put people on alerts and conservation notices and told some people ... told some communities their service, "We're turning your water off because we can't service you anymore." In that instance you have to be very aggressive about communicating it.

For us, we didn't run into the same issue, our systems different, it's a little more robust. We weren't facing the same issues but we have to go out and communicate that to our public so that they continue to have confidence that the system is going to hold up. That they're going to be able to draw water. That they're going to not be too negatively impacted by situations. In those situations you just need to be clear and direct and kind of upfront about what it is you're trying to accomplish with them.

Speaker 2:    A lot of major cities in the US ... I think Cleveland is one of these as well, have this central city population kind of out to the edges or into the suburban areas. I know that your area of operation extend beyond that but have you noticed that shift caused any changes with the way you need to communicate?

Employee:    It has, it has. Can you hold on for one second?

Speaker 2:    Of course.

Employee:    Thank you, hold on.

Sorry about that.

Speaker 2:    No problem.

Employee:     That's the wonders of public utilities issue, you never know when an issue's going to walk in the door.

Speaker 2:    Sure.

Employee:     I think I answered the most of the last question but if I didn't I can repeat it.

Speaker 2:    We were getting to the population and if that's impacted you as you look at that as more than just a City of Cleveland itself?

Employee:     It certainly ... It does but probably not as dramatic as you'll hear from some other folks because we do ... What it does for us is it creates new issues. As properties go vacant or become abandoned it creates issues for us, in terms of the infrastructure we have serving addresses and serving properties that we have to deal with and account for. Population loss ... The population, I think in our region and ... I'm not an expert on the population patterns in [inaudible 00:21:21] right now but it's actually ... Our service area isn't necessarily shrinking because we are so broad on the water side. What's impacting us more is conservation, conservation of smaller households.

Speaker 2:    Interesting.

Employee:     We see a pretty consistent decline in consumption because people are just using less water. They have more efficient appliances. They're a little more thoughtful about their usage. They're less people in each household so that's more of an impact on us than population loss.

Speaker 2:     Interesting. That's most of my questions I guess the last thing I wanted to ask is, is there anything that you think I should know about the City of Cleveland or communication in general within governments as I go forward with this?

Employee:     I guess maybe if you tell me a little bit more about what you're hypothesis is or what you're kind of examining in that would be helpful, because there are some things in the industry and some movements and some trends but I don't want to waste your time if that's not what you're focusing so what are you looking at? What are you trying to answer or solve or examine?

Speaker 2:     Really I'm looking at four cities across the US and the engagement ... There's a separate study that looks at how active citizens are within their processes of government and communicating with the government but I was ... I'm trying to look now and see how those cities are communicating with their residents and is there a relationship between the ways in which the city communicates and how their residents respond to that?

Employee:     I think one thing to look and looking for and something that we're looking at a little bit more aggressively is cities in general, I think need to do a better job learning and borrowing the communication techniques from the private sector marketing world. There are really valuable trends emerging on that side of the universe that have a ... I think a pretty profound impact on the way that cities and municipalities can communicate with their residents.

The typical ... There are changes going on in the traditional media universe and we could talk for days about what those are but those are changing folks and

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forcing people to be a little bit more creative in how we do our outreach. There's a lot of valuable techniques and this is we're moving as an organization into that universe from some of the ... Obviously, social and mobile communications is a place we have to go, more content driven, more pro-active based communication. Those are the areas that we need to be moving into not ... We do here in Department of Public Utilities.

But I think, we, as communications professionals ... government communication professionals nationally need to be moving more in that direction. We're not as good at those techniques as they are in the private sector and we should be because there's a tremendous amount of value in it.

Speaker 2:     Great. That's great. I guess my last question is, can I get your email address and then if I have any follow-up questions I can ... we can maybe cover that over email?

Employee:     Absolutely, it's Employee_@.com.

Speaker 2:     Perfect. All right, thank you Employee for taking a few minutes to chat with me. This has been hugely helpful.

Employee:     Good, good, well and good luck, [inaudible 00:25:24], as somebody who's gone through graduate school a couple of times I know these are never fun.

Speaker 2:     Yes.

Employee:     Well and good luck -

Speaker 2:     I think I'm more of in a fun class now than I will be in a couple of weeks when I'm writing.

Employee:     Last time when I did my dissertation that by the time I got to that point it actually had gotten fun again. I don't know ... This is a Master's thesis, right?

Speaker 2:     Right.

Employee:     When I got to my ... I have a Doctorate in Political Science and the conference exam process is so ugly and awful that by the time you get through it  and recover from it break in the dissertation was kind of fun, it was kind of go through your own pace. You're looking at something that you're interested in, so it was actually ... It will go much easier I think than you think once you sit down and start writing it.

Speaker 2:     Well, good, that's good to know.

Employee:     It's my words of advice to somebody who's been through it in the not too distant past.

Speaker 2:     Thank you.

Employee:     Feel free to email me if you have more questions. I'm more than happy to talk or email again.

Speaker 2:     Great. Thank you.

Employee:     Thanks. Ba-bye.

**Appendix 7.   Interview Transcript: Detroit 1**

Christi:         Hi there. Is this Employee?

Employee:    Hi. Yes, this is Employee.

Christi:         Hi. How are you?

Employee:    Good.

Christi:         Good. Thank you so much for calling in for this. This is really going to help me out a lot.

Employee:    Okay. No problem.

Christi:         So, first question before I get into the list of interview questions that I have is are you okay if I record the conversations, that I can transcribe it and take notes from it later when I'm doing my notes?

Employee:    Oh sure.

Employee:    Okay. Awesome. I guess I'll give you a little detail on what I'm doing and why I'm conducting these interviews. I'm a master's student George Mason University and my undergraduate degree is urban planning and the master's degree that I'm pursuing right now is for communications and public relation.

For my thesis I'm working at local governments and how they're connecting with their residents specifically when there's challenges with urban planning issues within the community. I'm looking at several communities across the United States and interviewing three or so folks from the communications and planning roles within

those governments to see how everybody is handling those situations and what can be done.

Employee: Okay.

Christi: I guess to start off, can you tell me a little bit about the role that you play in the government?

Employee: My official title is a senior publicist with the communications and creative services division, which is in communication department with the City of Detroit. Basically, we've got a small unit that includes publicist and writers and we have a photographer, we have web editor, graphic designer and then we have a copy center. Basically, any communications needs for the public, we get information out to the public and we get information out to the media for any programs and events from our department with the mayor's office or state council offices.

Christi: You guys do media and the residents, kind of the whole package.

Employee: Yes. If there's anything from printing pieces, if there's advertising campaigns involved for certain issues, we just make sure the information gets out.

Christi: Got you. Then within all of the communications that you do, in an overview are there certain key messages that you're continuously trying to communicate with the residents?

Employee: No, not so much around those lines. We do have a new administration so the mayor's office may have particular issues that they're specifically addressing. We work with the mayor's office and certain issues, but largely any kind of

event or activities or services we just want to make sure we get the information out to the public so they're aware of it.

Christi:  What are some of the tools that you use when you're trying to communicate information to residents?

Employee:  We send out press releases, arrange press conferences. Internally we've got a database of city employees that we send electronic communications to. We've got a publication we call City Briefs that we send out monthly which is a compendium of events and activities and services from the various departments that we send to newsletter editor throughout the city. There are about 138 of those right now with various newsletters, so we get the information there monthly.

Another part of our department is media services so we put information on the city's cable channel. There's information that news [crowds 00:09:22] put together that we put on the cable channel, news bullets and flyers that can go up in the cable channel. We've got social media. Like I said, we have a web editor in our department so anything, information put up on the web on the home page or on the various department pages.

Basically, with the City of Detroit this year, with the new administration, there's a couple of changes where the last selection it was voted on by district for the first time. Before it was just a general election and we had nine council members so now they've broken it into districts. There's seven districts where each of the council members have a district and there are two at large numbers and the mayor's office.

Under a different mayor it's been called different things. It used to be Mayor's Office of Community Affairs under a previous mayor, then it was Neighbor City House, but now there's a Department of Neighborhood. They were directly in those specific districts too so any information we need to get out we know we can provide to the council members and to the Department of Neighborhoods so they can get that to residents and those particular districts.

Christi:		Has social media changed the way that you communicate with residents?

Employee:	It certainly has in terms of just the speed of getting the information out. I do some of the information on social media, but there's somebody else here dedicated to social media. He gets instant feedbacks. Now if there's information to get out we know we can put it out that morning, that afternoon and get some feedback and make sure this people help spread a word about it. Yeah, definitely the biggest change is in the speed of the communications.

Christi:		Do you feel you've been able to use it to create a little dialogue or community within those platforms?

Employee:	I'm sorry. Dialogue or ... ?

Christi:		Do you find that residents are connecting with each other across the social media platforms of the city its hosting?

Employee:	I think they definitely share information. We would even put things like job notices, so even if people themselves are not looking for a job if they know of a neighbor or a friend or a family member looking, they'll definitely share the

information. In that sense, yes. If the Mayor has community meetings at the city council, they have regular evening community meetings, we know it gets out that way where they share it with others in the community.

Christi:        That's great. Do you know, is it a particular goal of the city to try and get more resident involvement within the government operation? It might be more specific department.

Employee:     Yeah. I'm not sure. Well, definitely community feedback in terms of what the needs and wants of the community are. If there's new initiatives going out there they want to make sure the community has a chance to give their feedback and what they would like to see done.

Just as an example, because the city is going through bankruptcy there are more services being privatized so something just starting right now. Garbage pickup and recycling has always been done in-house but right now they divided the city into half so they've got two companies starting this month and next month where they're going to provide the pickup, the recycling, the regular trash pickup.

There are community meetings about that, about the plans coming ahead for those and if people have input on what they think would work or not and sometimes those are incorporated into the larger plans for that particular effort.

Christi:        Okay. Interesting. Do you know of any examples where residents have come together to work on a project or an initiative within the city and then the city has become part of it?

Employee:     Where it was initiated by the residents?

Christi:     Right.

Employee:     I'm not really sure in terms of the community initiating it, but I know especially when there's a new administration there are certain issues that are always [poled 00:14:43] very high for community concerns and they're always along the lines of lighting or crime or education and bus service. Those are things that current administration right away within the first couple of months they focused on those particular issues.

There are a couple other issues that go city-wide like volunteer events that are happening annually, but they're not really initiated by the public but we get tens of thousands of volunteers. There's one actually coming up in May over three weeks and there's a city-wide clean-up and beautification effort where it's really driven by the city, but it's the volunteer that actually make everything happen in terms of the clean-up effort. Then there's one, another campaign in the fall. It's not so much driven by the public but they certainly have full participation in it.

Christi:     That's really interesting. A lot of the major cities in the US and around the world have been struggling with this central city population moving to the outer areas of the community. I know that that's something that Detroit has been facing for the past several years as well. Is that something that you've focused on within your communications or that you have to be aware of when you're communicating about different issues?

Employee:     When you say central to outer area, are you talking about out into the suburbs or within different areas within the city?

Christi:     Predominantly I'm thinking more about moving outside into the suburbs.

Employee:     Okay. In Detroit there's an ad reverse trend where there's a downtown and a midtown section which stretches about three miles from out of downtown which includes a major university and a hospital system. There have been a lot of residents moving in and there's been a housing shortage in those areas. It's the outer areas that's a larger concern, by outer within the City of Detroit.

Actually, there's an effort right now with the of demolishing abandoned homes but now, with the new administration, trying not to just demolish homes but try to rehab them and get people into the home. Something that was just announced this week is there's an online auction for so many homes and we're auctioning this house and there's number stipulations to make sure it's not just speculators trying to go there and make a quick buck off there, but within certain timeframes we've got to make sure the house is up to code and they've got somebody in there renting it.

That's a major effort to try to make sure people move back into this, not the homes that are unavailable but getting the homes that are vacant and getting somebody to move in at a good price, fix it up and get somebody stable in a house.

Christi:     Have you seen any resident involvement with trying to promote the city or the certain areas of the city that you think are becoming more popular?

Employee:    Different areas, their own communities will have home tours and events like that to promote their areas. That's really the first thing that comes to mind. Like I said, there's newsletters in the various communities so they'll promote all the events and activities going on in their places. There may be a community center that's hosting various events say for Easter coming up this weekend or for other events like that. Within the various communities they'll promote within their residents and as a way of [intentionally 00:19:40] getting people consider the value of moving into those areas.

Christi:    I see. From a communication perspective, what are some of the tactics that Detroit uses when you're trying to combat a negative situation or image of the city and you're trying to rectify that?

Employee:    Definitely not trying to hide anything but acknowledging where there are issues and things that can be fixed and really focusing on the efforts that are being made to rectify the situation where it may be bad like with the housing situation. If it's a blight issue there's another department called Department Administrative Hearings where they're actually training residents who are interested in identifying [inaudible 00:20:43] and filling out reports so the residents can get involved in solidifying their own neighborhoods by keeping track of houses that they feel may not be being kept up to code. [inaudible 00:20:58] some other ways.

Christi:    Interesting. You said that's a new department that you're working on?

Employee:    That department has been around a while but that's a new initiative where they're actually going to train residents rather than their own staff to try to get out

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and cover it because the city 139 square miles so it's difficult job for them, especially people are passionate about the city and their community and this empowers them to get trained and to be able to identify the code violations, so you get all those extra people out there canvassing the neighborhoods is an important thing.

Christi:        This is great. This is giving me some really good information. Just as a final question from your perspective knowing the areas or subjects that I'm looking at, what are the things that I should know about you as a communicator within a city or the City of Detroit itself?

Employee:     I guess basically, in terms of the communications angle we're just using every means we can to give information out. These volunteer efforts that I mentioned, one in the spring and one in the fall, we used to have a considerable budget for things, over $100, 000, that we would use to promote all the various elements of the campaign but now that money is largely gone so we had to do everything we can to promote the issues and that goes back to before social media. You had mentioned social media, that's another big way to get the information out for free and just setting up as many radio and television interviews as we can.

Sometimes there are corporations and foundations that will step up and provide money for some things, but's largely trying to communicate in as many ways as possible without any kind of budget being available but all of the various means I mentioned with the newsletter editors and printed pieces, the cable channel, the social media, the website, just give the information out and counting on this new right department of neighborhood the city council districts just to share, work together.

If we have information going on say in a council district, we let them know of any services that they can share. If city council has any events going on they work with us so this is symbiotic relationship where everyone's pulling together to help share the information and get it out there.

Christi:        Great.

Employee:      I think the meetings that are held in the public are valuable too with the Mayor's Office and city council, so they go into the community and into each of these districts so [inaudible 00:24:27] a chance to go out there and voice their opinions and either the Mayor himself will answer questions, the council members will ask questions and if somebody has particular issues they'll make sure to get the name and number of the people asking the questions to make sure they get a response as soon as possible.

Christi:        You mentioned the Mayor's Office going out and doing that. Do you know of some of the city departments doing that as well or is it all coming from the Mayor's Office and then down?

Employee:      There'll be representatives from the various departments when the Mayo goes out. Generally, he'll have department directors from five or six departments with him to directly answer those questions too, so whether it's the police department or transportation issues or lighting issues or whatever, it may be important in that community.

Christi:        I see. That makes sense. Okay, well that covers the information that I was looking to gather for this round. Thank you again.

Employee:     All right. It sounds like an interesting issue especially when you're getting perspectives from various cities around the country. It sounds like you're going to have an interesting paper you put together.

Christi:     Yeah. I'm certainly hoping. My hope is that as I'm working through the process and getting closer to the end that I can put together a summary and some notes and share with all the people that I was able to talk to so that you guys can hear what the other communities are [crosstalk 00:26:15].

Employee:     Sure. Yeah, that's what I was going to ask. That would be wonderful.

Christi:     Yeah. Definitely. I'd be happy to do that. I have your email so I'd just stay in touch that way if that works for you.

Employee:     Sure.

Christi:     Okay. Well, thanks Employee. This has been nice.

Employee:     All right Christi. Have a great day.

Christi:     You too.

**Appendix 8.  Interview Transcript: Detroit 2**

Speaker 1:     Okay. So thank you so much for all the content information and giving me all right away. That's been a huge help. I actually already met with XXXX this morning and then …

Speaker 2:     Yeah, he mentioned it.

Speaker 1:     This has been great. Hopefully I'll get these collected and then I can get on to my final analysis, so that will be good.

Speaker 2:     Tell me how many. Are you trying to do a number of cities? How many people are you trying to interview for? What's the basis of your thesis?

Speaker 1:     Sure. I'm really looking at how cities communicate with their resident population. I have a background in urban planning but I'm going to school now for communication, so it's where the two intersect for me. I've worked in local government for a long time. I'm actually not at the federal level but still in government so just how the government communicates with their stakeholders has always been interesting to me. I'm just in research to try and identify some cities that had similar population changes and look at how they're communicating with their residents. Its four cities; Detroit, Cleveland, Rochester New York and St. Louis; and then talking to three folks from each of those cities.

Speaker 2:     Okay.

Speaker 1:     It's been very interesting to hear perspectives from all these different locations.

Speaker 2:     Good.

Speaker 1:     Can you tell me a little bit about your role in the city of Detroit?

Speaker 2:     Well, Chris might have shared with you a little bit about our division which is Communications & Creative Services Division. Did he talk to you about that?

Speaker 1:     A little bit, but you're welcome to elaborate on it as well.

Speaker 2:     Within city government, we are considered non-departmental, and we are like a staffing division in that we support departments and elected officials. Although we do communicate with what's being done in departments, what's been said, what are the new initiatives but we're not necessarily the outwork station department. We're more of internal communications team but we also do interact with the public.

We primarily make sure that when an agency has to go out and interface with the public, whether it's a public meeting or whether it's just sending out information, we want to make certain that their information I would say stand in terms of print. We try to make sure that we help them to figure out what the best ways of communicating information of residents is.

We serve as an advisory role as well as to actually implement some of the communication strategies of plans, whether it's the mayor's office or it's through department or it's a city council member who wants to get that information out. That's what our role is.

With that being our broad emphasis of what we do, I supervise our team. It's myself as a publicist. I'm supervising publicist; and then there's another publicist in this

office, and that's Chris Kopicko; then I have a supervising photographer, graphic

designer, and the web editor as well as the two individuals who work in our reproduction

center which we call copy center. Can you hold just one second, please?

Speaker 1:     Of course.

Speaker 2:     I'm just going to interview with somebody and that's about 10

minutes. Sorry about that, [Christie 00:12:14].

Speaker 1:     That's not a problem.

Speaker 2:     That's what I do. I supervise a team; it's seven of us. As you were

talking about, since going to population decline and like Detroit which we've definitely

experienced. When I first came to the city, which has been a little over 25 years ago, we

were a booming department with 25 of us, 4-5 publicists and 4 graphic designers and 2

photographers. Now we're 7. So we do the best we can with what we have. Those cuts

have just … It really has been in the last … We really got cut. The city went through a

big layoff, a number of layoffs in 2005. Departments were just totally eliminated, and so

our department was reduced. We moved out. At that time, there were 25 of us and we

went down to about 10 and now we're down to 7.

We do what we can and we just have to manage expectations with a small staff,

but we refer to ourselves small but mighty because we do believe in helping people get it

done and make certain that the city's message just get out there.

Speaker 1:     Does your office take the information from the business side and

then massage the message or are there certain messages you try to inject into every

communication that comes from the city?

Speaker 2:     You know what? We don't do that as much as we should, but for the most part, we … I'll give you an example. We have a Department of Administrative Hearings. Maybe I'll just start with that. Let me start with Department of Public Works.

I'm working on a project. We're just contracting out solid waste collection. That's something new for us. There has always been something we've done internally. Now it's going to be done with two contractors; one on side of town and one on the other. The whole focus here has been just helping with the print material and we're setting news conference for that, and then we're doing a lot of earned media, trying to get to interviews and whatnot. Obviously put it on our social media platforms and on the website and all that.

Sometimes it is really just we're trying to tell you that your trash collection is about to change. There's not necessarily this overarching message that's in that in everything that we do. Sometimes it is. You'll see that more so when it's driven really from the mayor's office. Department level is not as tied in with the mayor's messages and communication strategies because some of it probably could be but it's not. So departments if they have a program that asked us to do a flyer and then there needs to be a news release written, we'll write it, but we don't necessarily always add to it this is an initiative of blah, blah, blah as part of his efforts to blah, blah, blah. We don't always do that with everything that we do.

Sometimes that happens. Mostly I say when it's mayoral initiative, but if it's a department when it's pretty much a standard program then we don't always really include that information or even picture it that way. We just say blah, blah, blah is changing the

garbage collection. We want you to do a story on it. We would like to have an interview. It's just straight to the point. So it really depends on what it is that we're doing.

Speaker 1:     That makes sense. What are some of the tools that you are using to communicate and reach the residents?

Speaker 2:     We primarily use … so first off is with news releases depending on what it is. Some things don't require news release, but we start with a news release. Because we have an added advantage of being the largest city in Michigan, it's just like people care what happens in Detroit, so when we serve things out, we do have to … some of them we don't have to even really go back and check the trees. People will call us saying I want to do a story on this. Sometimes we have to really go out and do that, working on the story, pitching the stories and whatnot.

We use obviously the media first, and then we may do a flyer or a brochure, and we do emails to our residents through our community newsletter editors. We do obviously communication through our employees, through our citywide emails, and a lot of the employees aren't residents of the city.

With me, I'm a city employee, and in my block everybody expects me to know everything. I'm always the bearer of information to the whole block. I happen to be the block captain too, so they're like, okay, what are we doing about this? I'm always the one that's passing information on or calling to say or checking to say, hey, don't forget garbage collection is one day late. Remember tomorrow is a holiday or whatever. I do that a lot on my block. We rely on our employees to get the word out.

There are a number of institutes within city government that when we send things out, they then pass it to their various networks of people and mostly through email. For example, when I send out … When we have a flyer that I'm just finishing up that says your garbage collection is going to change, lots of them know it but now we're going to really push it out to say come May 5th and June the 2nd it's happening so now we have to communicate what we're pushing out. When it gets sent out to the community newsletter editor through our Department of Neighborhoods, they're liaisons from the city government to community groups and organizations outside the city of Detroit; the city of Detroit, meaning the government I should say.

When we send it out, it just gets pushed out through all kinds of mechanisms. The Police Department has its own community relations offices, and the Department of Neighborhoods. There are all kinds of people that information just flies all over the place. What's so funny is when I see it come back to me, I just chuckle. I'll say, oh, know about that already.

We do news releases and we do flyers. We do emails. Chris might have mentioned to you. One of the things we utilize is the thing called city briefs. We take our news releases and whittle them down to smaller versions and send it out so people get a sense of what's going on. If they want the full blown information, they can always go to the website and it has all of the city releases on it and that information is also on the web. We try to do both.

We use our social media platforms. We use the website. Information that we are doing, whether it's a flyer for an event or it's a major initiative, it always ends up on the

website. There's kind of that cross promotion, so we have our cable channels so information goes up on the cable channel and then it goes out through our social media. We primarily use Facebook and we use Twitter, not as much Instagram but we do use the main two, Facebook and Twitter. We've the city's accounts and we also have Mayor Duggan who has his own account, so all that gets pushed out that way.

Those are the vehicles we use primarily to get the word out. Even within the building, depending on what the initiative is, you can see flyers posted in the building. You'll see departments sometimes have information on their calendars, depending on what it is.

We have two really big initiatives; and that is we have a cleanup effort every spring called Motor City Makeover. You have a lot of departments coming and taking part in that because it involves all kinds of employees in all departments. We also have a major initiative at the end of the year in October called Angels Night where it's really an anti-arson campaign. Those two pieces tend to get a lot of city department and city employee support because those are big initiatives of the city.

We use all of the various channels that I just mentioned to get the word out. If we have some money, we have to do some advertising but that doesn't that often. On occasion, we do get money and we can go for radio spots. We don't do that a lot, but we've had like last Monday, we did some radio advice which was for Angels Night. That's how that works.

If we have lots of money, we do billboards. We do radio spots. If we don't have any money, we just do all the earned media we can possibly drum up and all the word of

mouth and all the other vehicles I just mentioned; websites, social media, email and the like to get the word out.

Speaker 1:     Within your social media areas, do you find that residents are connecting with each other through the platforms that the city hosts?

Speaker 2:     I think there is some connection, but I'm sure there can be a whole lot more. Actually our challenge is that we have older population and so those social media platforms are great for people who are on it but the folks who aren't on it are the folks who still want you to send them a flyer in the mail or pick it up at the library. That's probably one of the challenges we have. Everybody is not online either. When we try to do city briefs, we do send it out in email but then we have to … We do know that some people because they just refuse to get an email address, they're like, oh, I'm too old for all that. Just send it to me in the mail.

We do that. That's what we do. We've got a few still on the snail mail list. It's not a lot. It's about maybe 25-30. We've really whittled it down. We try to get an email address from people and that saves us time and money, but there are a few people we just won't be so kind … We won't cut them off. We're like, okay, we can afford to mail 30 pieces of mail every month. We will do that. That's how that works.

Actually, I'm not as involved with the social media. I have access to it, but we actually have a person who handles social media for the city, and that's what he does solely. He pretty much handles all that stuff. I'm aware of what we're doing but I'm not as involved. On occasion, I'll put things out. He primarily deals with people asking for information and putting information out there, just trying to keep the connection there.

He does that primarily. I can't really speak as … I probably can look at it and ask some questions as to how effective he thinks it is. I'm sure there are people who get their information that way. He'd email it to some folks. That's the way they're going to get it. We use that as a vehicle.

I can't really talk intelligently about how successful and how engaging it is at this point.

Speaker 1:     Still some really good information there. With regard to the population changes, specifically with Detroit, has that been something that you had to participate in communications on to change people's perspectives that that's a negative or to try and combat that?

Speaker 2:     I can't say that we, as in our department, have been really focused on that. The things that I think cause people to want to move out and leave … I would say if I were to maybe list four, five things that cause people to say I got to get out of here: one would be the education system. Our education system has had its challenges in lots of our population because people have been leaving. It's not like A-plus education system. I wouldn't call it failing, but I'm sure it's probably just average. Some schools are obviously above that average and some below it. Education is a challenge. The school district is outside of city government, so I don't really have much input there.

The other challenge people have would be just crime, being an urban area that there are challenges with that. Some of it, you try to counter that. The city doesn't just do it by itself. That's the one thing I do appreciate because it hasn't been the city government trying to change the conversation solely, which is good because it's

sometimes hard to do that with limited resources, but there are a lot of organizations that are a part of Detroit that do a lot of that, helping to at least share the reality but also share … Let's be true. We know there's crime. There's going to be crime and there are issues. When there's a lack of jobs that attributes to all kind of stuff. We get that.

There are organizations that are partnering with the city and have for years been that voice, working to try to change the conversation and let's not just look at the grass being half empty but maybe it is half full really, so to speak.

City government … I think that's probably one of the things I would think would be the most frustrating part is that we're … somewhat hands are tied trying to change that conversation with the challenge we have within city government. You know Detroit is in bankruptcy. You already knew that, right?

Speaker 1:     Yeah, right.

Speaker 2:     That's had an affect too. That has a chilling effect in some ways too. There's even the issue with trying to change the conversation is hard when you have so many things that are going on. We're not trying to act like it's all wonderful here, but there are issues. City government hasn't been as focused on trying to change the conversation as much as I think we could be and should be. I think sometimes you get caught up in just trying to make sure the services are provided. You know what I mean? You know we have a role to play. We've got to make sure that trash gets picked up. When you're called, you got to come and show up because somebody's hurt or sick or needs medical attention.

I think sometimes we just haven't been as focused on that in terms of promoting Detroit and trying to change that loss of population. I don't think we have done a great job with that. There is some emphasis on that but some of it comes from outside the city government.

Speaker 1:     What are generally the tactics that you try and deploy or that you keep in your hip pocket when you're responding to something negative?

Speaker 2:     Well, believe it or not, we don't have to do that. If I were doing … Let me give you an example. The rule of thumb here is that if there's something that's negative that immediately goes to the mayor's office. We have a little bit of a division of labor here. If there's a crisis, I would not be handling that. Of course, I may be assisting in some way, gathering information and talking with the departments. Primarily when there's something that's a consequence, the mayor's office handles those. That's traditionally how it's been.

At one point, I would say there's been a little bit more of a connection there when our department would handle more of the least run of the mill things. If there was a crisis … well, no, even then. We will work with the mayor's office, but the mayor's office would take a lead on whatever the issue is. It would not be left up to the publicist.

I guess that's had its advantages because when you know you got a problem, you say, oh, you got to call the mayor's office, whatever. There is an advantage to that.

That's the part of my job that I probably dislike the most, is all the media stuff. I used to be a reporter, so I can definitely … I'm very open and trying to get the information we need, but that's the part of the job I hate the most, is when you have to

deal with all those inquiries and asking questions and somebody chasing the story and it really is not a story. They're just going on and on, like, oh my god, it's not a story. What are you talking about?

When that does happen, we usually will just refer them to the mayor's press people upstairs on 11th. However, if I were dealing with some of those things, I think part of the challenge is responding to it and not forever always being upfront, not trying to just call anything, but answer the question and being truthful and then giving anybody what our solution to that problem will be. We don't leave it with that. Some city employee stole all these documents and people's personal, confidential information was compromised. That's going to be a negative story.

We talk about that. What happens with the employee? What are you doing? Then, what we would do to make sure that this does not happen again. What are some safeguards we put in place? For me, I think that's always the way I'd like to deal with it. Be upfront. Ask the questions in a timely manner. Their deadline doesn't always mean it's your deadline. That's another thing you got to keep in mind. Making sure that you answer the question, be truthful, and then what are we doing to deal with the situation so it doesn't happen again?

Those are the kinds of things. When I talk to people, I say that's what I always tell them. Tell them the truth. This is the way it happened. This is what we're going to do to not make it happen again. It doesn't happen again. I will say that was how I would handle any kind of media. Find out what it is, what the story is about, be clear what they're looking for. What is your deadline? Then go from there.

Get the parties in place to know … Just make sure we know what the answer is how we respond to this and let's be all on the same page saying the same thing. Who is the person that they're going to talk to? Not five people but one or two people, and making sure you control that message in some way so that it is what you want to be received and to be communicated to the residents.

Speaker 1:     Really good, interesting. I guess as a final question what, if anything, should be my takeaway from learning about the city of Detroit and then communication practices there and the catchall question?

Speaker 2:     I would say that … and I don't know what you picked up from other cities, but I'm sure that if money were not an object, we could do an even better job what our responsibility is. Since money is an issue, I think that for any communication operation is to communicate to as in various ways so that you are hitting people the way they receive information so that's key and I think that's the thing. Even when you are on a limited budget, there are some ways that you can get information out and still be effective, still be timely, still be sharing the overall thing, the overall message that you want to get out there.

I will say that's the thing. I do look at … I have friends who work in other places and how they … Oh, girl, we have almost 30 people, and I'm like, really? Wow. Yeah, that's why you can do the things that you can do. We can't do as much. We're a big, huge city with less people than this little city over here.

Anyway, I guess the takeaway would be that even when you don't have the money or the team, the staff to do this big splash and be all over the place that there are

ways to get your information out. If you're timely, if you do it in even various vehicles and the information is clear and well presented that you can be effective as well. Because even a place like in New York, and I think you said New York is one of the cities you have been interviewing people. Is that correct?

Speaker 1:     Yes.

Speaker 2:     I remember one time I called to talk, because I was doing a comparison. We were doing some revamp in our website and we're looking for content management systems for our website. I called New York and I was blown away, really. This is a huge city. I understand that. In just one little area, I asked, I talked to the person who was responsible for … Somebody in the CIO's office. I can't remember who it was I talked to, but I asked about their website. I asked what kind of content management they used for the website. She said, oh, we had ours custom-made. It was customized for us. How much was that? She told me a million dollars. I said, for a content management system, a million dollars? She said, oh yeah, we do things big. I said okay.

Then, I asked her about how many people were responsible for the website. She said, oh, we have 200 people. I'm overwhelmed. I said wow. I just chuckle because I thought, wow, no wonder. They have 200,000 employees in New York City and they have 200 folks working on their website. Wow. So no wonder the website could be sing and dance and do a shuffle. We were talking about that.

Anyway, the answer is, just to go back and reiterate, I was saying, is that when you look at when you can do. You try to be as effective in what you have and use your time and your skills appropriately and maximize as much you can, knowing that you

can't do everything but you can reach as many people as you can with what you're doing and don't sweat it that you don't have a million people on your team. You just do what you can. Do the best you can with what you have. The glass to me is always half full.

Speaker 1:    That's great. I covered all of the questions that I had. What I'm hoping to do from here is once I get all of the interviews done and the information synthesized, I'm hoping to put together a little information packet for all of the folks that I interviewed, and I'll share with you guys what I learned from all the different places so that you can at least hear what's going on in the other cities and maybe get some other ideas of things that you could be doing.

Speaker 2:    Oh my, goodness, because it's something to be learned from someone else.

Speaker 1:    Yeah, that's the only thing I have to offer you. Thank you for your time. It's been really great to get this information.

Speaker 2:    Thank you so much. I wish you the best.

Speaker 1:    All right, thanks.

Speaker 2:    Okay, bye-bye.

**Appendix 9.   Interview Transcript: Detroit 3**

Christi:         Hi Employee.

Employee:    Hey, yes.

Christi:         Hi, thanks for switching over. This is going to make things a lot

easier for me.

Employee:    No problem.

Christi:         Are you okay if I record the call so that I can take notes later?

Employee:    Yeah, no problem. You said you spoke with Rose Law.

Christi:         Yes.

Employee:    Okay, great.

Christi:         A little about what I'm working on, I'm doing my master's thesis at

[inaudible 01:38] University and my undergraduate degree is in urban planning and my

hopeful master's degree is in communication and PR. I'm interviewing three individuals

in a few cities across the country to talk to them about how they communicate with

residents with regards to some urban planning challenges and then how they are trying to

get citizens more active in the government and the programs that they have. That's what

my questions center on, the next handful of them.

To get started, can you tell me a little bit about your role in the city

government?

Employee:    We are a part of [inaudible 02:25] New Department of

Neighborhoods, which really is a community outreach. Our first task is we are hired to

try to get a handle on the [black 02:40], being abandoned houses, and we go dumping, abandoned commercial structures and code violations, things of that nature.

Christi:    When you are communicating with residents, what are some of the key messages that you are trying to translate to them?

Employee:    For starters we have $16 million in escrow for fire damaged homes, if their home has insurance on it. The first order of business was to collect information on those homes, cross reference those homes, and then have them moved up in the pecking order for demolition. That's the low hanging fruit for demolition, and then from that point we are focusing on the damaged structures that are closest to schools.

Its a few layers to hopefully get them bumped up on the pecking order for demolition. The ones that are going to take a little bit more time, we have community groups that have volunteered to get them safe. They'll board them up. We have partners like Home Depot, AmeriCorps, and they've been really great in district, District 3, in getting these properties boarded up.

Christi:    When you are communicating with residents, is it usually face-to-face or is it electronic? What are some of the tools that you are using to get the messages out?

Employee:    All of the above. We are really the team with the boots on the ground. There are seven districts now and that's due to the new City of Detroit Charter. Council members are now required to live in their districts, which came out to be seven districts, and to complement those efforts and helping citizens' move a little further faster

the mayor has appointed two managers, deputy manager and manager in each one of those seven areas.

Christi:     They are the ones that are predominantly communicating with the residents?

Employee:   Right, and that's what I'm a part of. We reach in block club meetings two, three times a week, weekend functions. We are on the ground. A lot of face-to-face and a lot follow up via email, phone conversations.

Christi:     Have you guys gotten into using social media from your vantage point?

Employee:   Not from the Department of Neighborhood Offices, not yet. The social media now is run by the Mayor's Office of Communications. Once the message comes through their social media, and if it pertains to our district, then we are contacted and then we are the ones that handle the follow up. Just trying to make sure everything is streamlined and not all over the place.

Christi:     Have you had any experiences or any examples where you can provide where residents are forming together to create their own initiative or effort to improve the city?

Employee:   Yes, we have a lot of active groups in the area. Let me think. In Regent Park, which is in district three, we have a group, Life Builders. What Life Builders has done, they have maybe 73 blocks in their neighborhood. They have purchased a few homes, started out a few years back to help single mothers.

They went from there and that pushed them in the area to do a lot more. They make the immediate community trying to feel needs, helping out where they can and the organization is getting pretty big now. They have a lot of outside help.

I don't have a lot of details on them but I know they initially started with helping out the single mothers and as well as purchasing the homes in the area, rehabbing them, or purchasing them, trying to get them demolished. Right now they are trying to purchase an abandoned school from our public school system, DPS, to make it a community center. That's a great example of the community coming together.

Christi: Yeah, for sure. How has your office, if at all, interacted with them? Has that been mainly through the meetings that you were talking about or have there been other things that have happened as well?

Employee: Yes, they are located in the Regent Park area but Regent Park has its own neighborhood association as well so we partner with both. We are currently trying to have discussions about starting a neighborhood radio patrol, which is simply neighbors volunteering their time to patrol throughout the day, just trying to deter crime. With Life Builders we are meeting, trying to point them in the direction where they possibly could find funding to acquire the school, the abandoned school now.

Christi: A lot of the cities that I've been talking to and a lot more than just the ones that I've been talking to have issues with Central City population that's moving out to the suburban area, and it's causing a lot of challenges for the major metropolitan community. It sounds that's something you are right in the thick of with Detroit.

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Employee:     Yes and no. We are beginning to see over the last maybe four or five years that that process is in reverse. We have more suburbanites moving back into the city with the new housing projects that have been in town. I believe it started downtown around the Fox Theater, a community, nice condos that were built. Now, with the mayor's new initiative, where if you are a slum lord, he has put in place a new land bank that has put all the different land banks under one land bank, and in doing that we are able to sue for the deed of a property.

Once that process is over we have begun holding auctions for these properties. As a matter of fact, we had an open house yesterday in East English Village, which is one of our prominent neighborhoods in Detroit. You could actually probably Google it. It was all over the news. A lot of foot traffic. They did an open house. I believe they toured maybe 15 to 20 houses, and the auction will be open bid on May 5. It's a lot of interest of moving back into the city.

Christi:     These programs that you are talking about, how is the city advertising them or letting the public know what's happening?

Employee:     News media, we have billboards up, they are advertising through the mayor's social media. The seven districts, the manager and deputy managers were doing email blasts, as well as partnering with community groups in that area. As well as the churches that are in their area, non-profits they are in their area and just the citizens that actually live next door to these abandoned structures are inviting our friends, family that want to relocate in the city.

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Christi: Is there a particular method that you are communicating that you are seeing residents respond to more positive for you or something that they've requested?

Employee: As far as the auctions?

Christi: Just in general, that you giving information to them, have they come back and requested that you use a different resource or is there something that you've used that they really like?

Employee: We have a very diverse demographic. You may have some seniors that do not use Internet, does not have an email. You may have the Internet savvies, middle-aged. The best way we can get it out, we get it out. At this point, I haven't received any complaints.

Christi: You're just hitting everything that you can?

Employee: Absolutely.

Christi: From your perspective, when you receive a complaint or are brought into an issue that might be a negative issue, what do you keep in your hip pocket to respond to those types of things?

Employee: I first order of business is trying to solve the problem. For instance, we had a citizen. The water sewerage drain in front of the house was back up often. Our first thing would be to contact that department, speak to that supervisor or that director and try to knock the problems down one by one. Then get back with the citizen, let them know the actions that we're taking and then connect them with a point person in that

department. If nothing happens, depending on the situation, a week or two, give us a callback and we will make our calls again.

Christi:     I think we've talked about this but I want to have a catch-all question. Is there anything that you're doing to specifically promote the positive things that have happened to combat any negative images that the client may have had on the city?

Employee:     The city has a City Briefing that's put out once a month or as needed. It's an update that has to be put out that citizens are real good at printing out and getting out to these changes that may not have email, as well as we print copies out and take them to our community meetings and make sure it's well circulated as well as forwarded on our email blasts. The city also has a city web, but it doesn't work with our city.

What we do is a city programming on our local cable channel where we're highlighting non-profits and the great work that they're doing. We are also highlighting block clubs and the great work that they're doing. It's kind of a good news channel for us. On that channel, we also had the scrolling stills advertisement where we invite them out to business and recreation we're going to have. For instance, our Senior Olympics, we showed on there who the gold medal. This is a good way to get the information out.

Christi:     From hearing you talk, it sounds like being able to reach a non-Internet savvy senior population is something that's important that you've been working on. Is that something that you think is probably true?

Employee:     Absolutely, absolutely.

Christi:     Interesting. That's kind of the end of all of my questions, but I like to leave with one open-ended question in the research that I'm doing. What do you think is probably the most important thing that I should know about the City of Detroit or some of these issues?

Employee:     I would say that the mayor and his level of commitment and accountability is definitely being applauded. I have been in the Community Outreach for eight years under the mayor's office. Just the response that he's getting and the accountabilities that he's holding these departments to, it's the first auction out of eight years. Not to say the other mayors were just falling by the way side but he's focused.

He's focused and I believe a lot of legislators in Lansing have been passed to help his efforts out as well. We are in the process of installing street lights over the entire city. This has been a problem for Detroit since I can remember, so we have two problem areas that are system [inaudible 18:17] at their completion and then the process. They have to put in there 600 to 700 lights a week, and the residents are responding well to that.

In a nutshell, I think the administration, we have the right administration. They are focused and they are zeroing in on the issues that citizens have been complaining about for years, lights and safety.

The emergency manager and the police chief, they have beefed up patrols. Response time is a lot better. They are really going after the illegal activities with a big hammer. You kind of get to feel that you're feeling safer now. The lights are being turned on and you can't wait to see what will happen next, as well as the abandoned structure

next to you has a possible family moving in with the auctions. There's a lot of great energy going on right now.

Christi: That's really good to know. Thanks, this has been a huge help for me to get these couple of minutes to chat with you and get this information. I really appreciate it.

Employee: No problem. This is a paper you're doing and where would it be used?

Christi: What's that?

Employee: I said, where would this be used?

Christi: Just in my master's thesis, the final document. I'm trying to talk to three folks from four different cities across the US. Detroit is one. Saint Louis, Rochester and Cleveland are the others, just to see how each of them is communicating with their residents and compare that with some statistics.

My hope is that over the next month or so, I'll put together a summary of all these things that I write and I'll share it with all of the folks that were kind enough to sit down to an interview with me so that you can hear what the other cities were working on, share some best ideas and things like that.

Employee: Sounds good. I'm glad we were able to make this happen.

Christi: Yes, this was wonderful. Thank you so much. Have a great day.

Employee: You too, bye.

**Appendix 10. Interview Transcript: Rochester 1**

Christi:     Hi there.

Employee:    Employee.

Christi:     Hi. It's Christi.

Employee:    Hi.

Christi:     Hey. Thanks for taking the time this morning to call in. This is going to be a huge help for me.

Employee:    Good, good. Are you from Rochester?

Christi:     I'm not. I actually grew up in Chicago and I live in DC now, but my undergraduate degree is in Urban Planning. That's the field that I work in but I'm going back for a Masters in Communication. I've been looking at how governments are communicating with their residents and connecting with them in the hopes of making residents more active within the community. Rochester actually has a pretty high active citizenship rate. I thought it would be interesting to talk to a couple of folks from here and then there's a few other cities across the country that I'm talking to as well.

I just have a handful of questions here and I think that can get us on track to talk about a few things in your knowledge and experiences. I guess first I have to ask I'm recording the conversation so that I can transcribe it and then compare. Are you okay with that?

Employee:    Yes.

Christi:     Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about your role in the city of Rochester's government?

Employee:     Yes. My title is New Media Editor. That's more like an interactive media editor. That means that I maintain the content on the city's website and our social media platforms. Other than that, all the people in … I work in the Bureau of Communications. That means I do standard public relations' work, so writing press releases, issuing media advisories, responding to questions from the media, anything that a person in the field of public relations would do, I do for the city of Rochester.

Christi:     Nice. Are there some specific key messages that are always core to what you're communicating with residents?

Employee:     I would say that yes. The mayor's philosophy or her beliefs are that the underlying issues of our priority, the focus of our priority should be education, economic development and public safety. If you address those three things, all of the things you do if they address those three things, the city will be better in the long run.

Christi:     Interesting. With you being the New Media Editor, what are some of the platforms that you're using to get the messages out?

Employee:     Well, our website is the number one platform. Obviously that's more of a passive platform then we put the information out. We hope that the people come to it but that's where you can put the biggest amount of information. For instance, you can put an entire meeting agenda on the website. People can come and read whatever they want. The other ones are we issue press releases and media advisories. A press

release would be to let somebody know what happened at a meeting or something like that and then a media advisory would be to alert people that a meeting has taken place.

We also issue releases on a regular basis updating, just letting people know what meetings will be taking place later that month with ample notice. We run ads in the paper, legal ads and things like that. We post our meeting notices on a bulletin board in City Hall. Our website includes a calendar or upcoming events that people can watch. Any public meeting or public hearing would be notified on that calendar.

Those are the standard and then on top of that, in a more modern era we've also put a lot of this information out on Facebook and Twitter. We do also use YouTube when available. We also have a public television station in Rochester. We post information on that as well through crawls and things like that.

Christi:     Within the newer, like your Facebook page or anywhere else that there would be an opportunity, have you seen residents start to connect with other residents and a conversation happen there?

Employee:     No. I would say no, that hasn't happened. It's more if somebody made a comment on a post. If we put out a post that there'll be a meeting, somebody may make a remark. To be honest a lot of the remarks that we get tend to be more political, like somebody may agree or disagree with something that's happening. It's not a forum, it's not turn into a forum on the say the pros and cons of a particular item.

We've also, for instance on urban planning right now, there's going to be anew street. In Rochester we used to have a mall downtown, an indoor mall. It was built in the 60s and as you know downtown malls really aren't viable anymore. We

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demolished that mall and replaced with a street grid. That has created a couple of new streets and an urban and a park that's going to be installed there. It's not there yet. It's still under construction. We put on our website suggestion forms where people can go on to the website and actually suggest names for these new streets, park and things like that. That's actually ongoing. The deadline to offer your suggestions is Mach 31st. We put that out on Facebook to let people know that they can reach our website through that.

That's an example I would say of a forum but to answer what I think is your original question, we don't really … social media is not really a forum first to debate the pros or cons of different policy issues.

Christi:        Got you. I know you talked about the website having the calendar and things like that. Are there specific things that the city is doing to try and get citizens more involved or are you pretty satisfied with the level of involvement that you have now?

Employee:      Well, I mean we do a lot of … our city is sort of broken down. We deliver services on a quadrant basis. We've divided the city into four geographic areas. Each of those quadrants has what's called a neighborhood service center. Those service centers are out in the neighborhood and people can go to the service center. If you want say request, get information on a permit application that you might have seen in your neighborhood, you can go there to get that information. The people who run those centers interact almost one-on-one with the neighborhood organization.

In a particular quadrant you might have anywhere from a dozen to … well, some have fewer than others, more than others. There might be a neighborhood group or

neighborhood association or there might be a community development corporation. There's all sorts of grassroots organizations working in each of the quadrants. The neighborhood leaders, the neighborhood service center administrators establish very good working relationships with those groups.

If taking issues like drive thrus, that's the kind of thing that people are concerned about. If you are building a restaurant, if new restaurants are going through and there's an application to have a drive thru put in, people in the neighborhood might be opposed to drive thrus because they want a more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood or they perceive the drive thrus are not pedestrian-friendly. They will bring those concerns. They'll usually start with the neighborhood service center administrator to find out where that process is or they'll leave and say, they'll see a restaurant being built. They'll know that that particular restaurant use drive thrus. They'll ask if the administrator, "Are they planning on having a drive thru?" At that point the administrator will give them the information they need to tie into the approval process.

I would say our most effective form of communication is almost on a one-on-one basis. These administrators literally go to the meetings at night. If a neighborhood association has its monthly meeting, the administrator will go there and look at that. They'll point them to the information on the website.

Christi:        Okay. Great. That's great. It's related a little bit but I've been looking at some challenges for major cities within the US in general. One of the challenges that I've been looking at is this central city decline where populations are

moving more towards the suburban areas and there's been challenges within the downtown. Is that something that Rochester is familiar with or messaging about?

Employee:    Yes. We're not alone in that. To be honest, I think we're in better position than a lot of cities our size in our northeastern part of the country. We've actually got some positive development but yes, our downtown is not what it was in the 60s and 70s. The biggest thing is downtowns used to be retail destinations and ours no longer is. We have some very positive growth in the residential market and our plan right now, the hope is that as the residential market expands it will draw more retail behind it.

Really what we're hoping now as you probably know sort of the holy grail of a downtown is a full service grocery store. You hope to get to a tipping point. If you just use a raw number, for us we hope if we can get 10,000 people to live downtown that will probably support the grocery store. Once the grocery store gets in, that will bring more people downtown. Then you start to have the positive perpetuations. We do have business moving downtown so we're in better shape than I think a lot of cities our size but it is a challenge and it's something we're working on.

Christi:    Is that something that stakeholders or residents have picked up on and that you had to respond to a negative communication on behalf of the city?

Employee:    What do you mean by negative communications? That downtown is not good enough?

Christi:    Yeah, something like that. I mean there's a myriad of things that …

Employee:      Yes. We've done for instance, we did a community service a year or so ago where we … I won't be able to repeat the results off the top of my head but we've done a survey to see, to get people's opinions on what their perception of downtown is. This survey is influencing our master planning. We're actually in the process of developing a center city master plan. We're updating. It was last updated in 2000 I think. I'm not sure about the date so I wouldn't use that, but we're in the process of updating our center city master plan. The center city master plan has included some surveys we've done, online surveys not scientific surveys.

There are perceptions that downtown is not as good. There are people who won't come downtown and think we should be doing more to make it better. Then there are people who think we're investing too much downtown. People think that neighborhoods in our city are not getting their focus and that we've worried more about downtown than we are in the city, than the residential neighborhoods or the commercial quarters than the residential neighborhoods. It's a balancing act I guess. We have to focus on downtown but we also have to make sure people don't think it's our only focus.

Christi:      Right. Have you had a lot of interagency communication on that issue within the government?

Employee:      Well, you mean with Monroe County? Yes. I mean so for instance in Monroe County there's an Industrial Development Authority that provides tax breaks and things like that. We communicate with them in helping to track businesses downtown. When we removed that mall from the center of our city, it was funded. A big chunk of the asbestos abatement that was done with that came from the state. We had

federal help as well. Every city, county, state and federal government have all played a role in helping with the revitalization of the downtown.

Christi:        Interesting.

Employee:      Again, same thing, we're rebuilding a bus terminal downtown which had funding from just about every level of government. Again, the bus system is run by an authority so that's a multiagency. That's another example of a multiagency cooperation.

Christi:        Awesome. I guess my last question would be from your perspective as someone who communicates on behalf of the city, what are some of the most important things that I should know about the city of Rochester and your communication with your residents?

Employee:      That we're always looking for the next way. We don't ever think that it's good enough. What we're doing now is what we're doing but we realized that people are busy, that not everybody pays attention to the things we think that they're paying attention to. For instance if we put a legal notice in the paper and alert somebody to a meeting, we would not say we've done our job, that that's good enough. We're always looking for the next vehicle or the next medium to communicate with the citizens. We do want the citizen's involvement. I don't think anybody is content on the level of involvement. I think the more the merrier I would say.

If we're going to have one takeaway, it's for instance the use of Facebook to alert people to meetings and things like that. When the next idea comes or the next

vehicle comes, we'll give it full consideration and if we can make it work to our

advantage, we'll use it.

Christi:        Great. Thanks. That's awesome.

Employee:     Now where do you work? You're at urban planning right now?

Christi:        Yeah. I actually work for the federal government for the

Department of Veterans Affairs. Then before that I was with the Department of Defense

but I started in local government in a suburb outside of Chicago and then I worked my

way through up to county and then regional and now at the federal level. There are many

days I miss actually knowing minute details of the community that I'm working with and

heading out into the neighborhood and that kind of thing.

Employee:     You're getting a Masters in communications and you're going to

specialize in helping municipalities communicate with their constituents on like planning

issues? Is that your goal?

Christi:        Yes, that's what I've been looking at. I sit on a task force for the

White House Council for Strong Cities, Strong Communities. Our goal there is to connect

federal resources with local governments and then also to take best practices from local

governments and share them across the country to try and grow the American economy.

That's really what's been most interesting to me. We have this huge country of resources

but maybe the communication just isn't happening to share the best practices or even the

resources that are happening at every level.

Employee:     Well, obviously we'd be interesting in your findings. I hope at

some point if you come up with some good ideas, I hope you let us steal them.

Christi:	Yeah, definitely. That's definitely part of my plan. As I'm collecting all of these, I'm hoping to put it all together. Obviously I don't have the final document but then a few page summary of the best practices that I've learned or things to avoid from all the places that I've talked to. Then maybe that conversation can continue through the White House initiative which I think will be great.

Employee:	I would add to those platforms we use and I didn't mention this before this really is just not working as well as we wanted it to but we do have an RSS feed for our land use boards. On our website all of our land use boards are on webpages. You can literally go to the Planning Commission webpage and see the agenda for the upcoming meeting and you can see the minutes for the most recent meeting and sort of watch those land-use decisions through the agenda process.

Technically they have an RSS feed on them that people can be alerted to when the agenda has been posted and the minutes have been posted, but as you might know RSS really isn't … our experience with it is that it really isn't helpful to a lot of people because I think RSS is becoming an obsolete technology. We are looking for a way to fix that, a better way. Just to point out that we're always looking for the next best thing.

Christi:	That's interesting. RSS is kind of a one wave that I wonder if I'll come across someone that's using something that has been working.

Employee:	I mean I don't know how far we'll get with this so I'm hesitant to just volunteer it but like push notifications or something like that. That is one of our goals is to let people know what these land use boards. They fly under the radar. People watch

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the city council meetings pretty much more religiously than say the Planning Commission or Zoning Court of Appeals, but we are trying to get more participation in those and bring the people's attention.

Christi:        Yeah. That's really interesting.

Employee:    Contact me any time if you have any follow-up questions and I would be interested when you've gotten some research to show or something you're ready to share publicly. I definitely would like to know what you're doing so we can see what we can learn from it.

Christi:        Yeah, for sure. I got your email and I'll shoot you an email when I've got some stuff or if I come up with more questions. As I've been talking to more communities, my list of questions is growing. I'm sure I'll loop back with you. You're hitting about the middle of my process.

Employee:    Great. Okay.

Christi:        Yeah, for sure and thanks again for taking the time this morning to chat with me. This has been great.

Employee:    Good luck.

Christi:        Okay, thanks.

Employee:    Bye.

**Appendix 11. Interview Transcript: Rochester 2**

Employee:     Christi, this is [Employee 00:05:07], how are you?

Christi:     Good, how are you?

Employee:     I'm fine. Thank you. Heavy Friday.

Christi:     Yes, no kidding. It's been a busy week.

Employee:     Where are you?

Christi:     I actually live in DC. I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, but I live in DC now. Actually, I'm an urban planner by trade. I work for the Federal Government as a planner, but got my start in suburb of Chicago and then I'm going back to grad school now for communications and focusing on how local governments communicate with their residents and kind of the whole planning aspect in how we communicate as a government. That's how I got into roping you into this interview. I think that you have taken a time here.

Employee:     No, not a problem.

Christi:     So I first have to ask. I'm going to record the interview so that I can transcribe everything but your name won't be part of the report or anything like that. Are you okay with that?

Employee:     Yeah I'm fine even if my name is in there. How big can it be?

Christi:     True.

Employee:     I'm not running for anything so I don't ... I'm not as nervous about my paper trail.

Christi:    Good plan. I just have a handful of questions. The first is if you could just tell me a little bit about your role in the government.

Employee:    I am the city engineer here in the City of Rochester and that role basically, we do pretty much everything between the buildings. Permit office handles utility permits and our water bureau's permits for any work they do within the driveway.

Any kind of sidewalk, street closures, those kind of things come through our traffic control board and all of the state and federal. Past projects we do with state and federal dollars that we do in any projects that we do with city funds both on our Ontario and [Fletcher 00:07:23] Streets. One of the neighborhood is also under me.

I also have the city's architectural group but that really just focuses internally on the 140 city buildings that we own.

Christi:    Is there a separate planning division within the city?

Employee:    There is. There's a separate planning division in our neighborhood and business development area. They kind of put together neighborhood plans and those kinds of things and sometimes do planning efforts for street revitalization which we then sometimes implement.

We have what's called a four part process where you do revision session and all those kind of things that we've done I think like six or seven streets now to try and revitalize business along the urban corridor. Just if we're going to be spending money on the street, we like to get more than just new curbs and sidewalk. We like to make it, get positive change for the street.

Christi:     With regard to you or your office and interaction that you might have with local residents, can you explain to me what are some of the common ways that you would interact or communicate with them?

Employee:     I guess on the daily day to day pedestrian kind of basis, we handle all complaints regarding the snow removal, sidewalk repairs and replacements, water ponding in my driveway, anything that within the ride away that any resident might call about. We address those and then on projects, we have a pretty regimented outline. We have a project meeting if it's even our ...

Whether it's our own or a consultant-based project, we would have a project meeting before we do anything except maybe just to have a plan of the streets that exist today just to meet with residents, talk about what we're planning on doing. We have a certain amount of money and we're either going to put in new curbs or we're going to rehab the streets or they're getting new street lights.

Whatever the improvement is going to be and then from that, we then have ... Then we'll go back and do some design and then come back with say 50% plans or something to the community and say do we hear what you were saying and how we're reacting to that. Then take that information back and then that kind of follows right through the construction.

We have a public meeting when we start construction with the contractor and our staff to make sure that everybody knows what's going to be happening during the discussion when the streets are going to be closed, who to call if your driveway is blocked, all those kind of things.

On a project level, you kind of take a cradle to the grave with public communication. On the bigger projects like downtown ... We're going to do a major street in a downtown, we may spend five or six months just doing building consensus with the community. It's what they want to do with this particular court or something before we ever even actually start any design work because we're going to make some kind of major change to say a park or something.

If the park is not being used or activated, so one of the things that we need to do is just a place that we should be putting a water park or playground or a skate park or whatever it may be to get the park more utilized. Or any of those kinds of things going to be at odds with something that's already going on in there whether it's residential or commercial or hotels or anything in the area.

Christi:          What are some of the tools or platforms that you've used to get the word out to residents that you're looking for their input?

Employee:       Input? Yes. We got here in 2007, we were pretty much tied to the usual. We have a GIS system and we drew the circle around the project that kind of thing and sent letters out and hope people would show up. As in most cities, a lot of people are not the owners which are typically in those databases and especially apartment complexes and those kinds of things.

You don't get a lot of people, so we've done things down to door hangers and those kinds of things. Now, we're moving into social media. Almost all of our meetings are out on Facebook and the city's Twitter and Facebook sites. We post them on the city's website and we have ...

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As part of our Neighborhood and Business Development Department, we have it broken into four quadrants and they have neighborhood service centers. Those centers typically have the most current names and addresses of the people and then [black clubs 00:12:59] and those kind of things. They get that information out to those black clubs and then typically they have their own mailing list and they would get it out to those people.

A lot of it sent electronically and through social media, but we're still ... Even with all that, we're still doing the mailings to a quarter mile, whatever the appropriate distances based on the project corridor. We even gone to advertising for some of these, but that's really more for the bigger projects.

Christi:        Have you used anything beyond the public meeting to get feedback or is it namely just the public form?

Employee:     On a couple of ... We did a downtown parking study and we actually had an online survey that we did for that and took that online information. We also did that for ... We've done that for two projects. One was a parking study and I can't remember what the other one was, but that's not something we do a lot of, but we've talked about trying to have some ...

People can always email comments and we try to post the presentations that we make online. If you went out to their city website now, one of the big projects we have going on is the Inner Loop East project which is basically we have this loop that rings the city and we're raising one section of it up to reconnect the neighborhood and get rid of the six lane highway that really isn't necessary and kind of divide the city.

But on that one, you'll see everything from the original studies to our grant applications to the current design process which we're ending and going to start a construction on the summer on. On a bigger projects we have, we kind of go to that extent of putting all of our information out there.

Christi: Has your community had been looking at kind of trans-across the US in one popular trend that we have putting right now, it's kind of ... No one use the word decline, but within a central city, the population is moving more towards suburban areas or not in the central downtown and that's been a challenge for a lot of communities. Is that something that you been or experienced within your city?

Employee: We did. We're actually seeing the opposite now. We're seeing a lot of people moving back into the downtown core which had pretty much been abandoned for the suburbs, but we find a lot of on marrieds and folks whose kids have grown moving back into the city just so they can have walk to theater and those kind of things and just maybe get along with car and use them as transit and those kind of things.

We've actually seen an increase in downtown. Citywide, we have declined in population. Part of that is related to the number of jobs, but part of it was also related to the tough shape our school system has in as far as graduating people. It's pretty abysmal graduate right somewhere below 50%. Anyone with kids is typically either going to a charter school or moving out to the suburbs when their kids get much beyond 3rd grade.

Christi: Have you ...

Employee:     We currently are the 5th poorest city in the country we found out. That obviously is the driving part of what's happening. Everybody thinks of the town as being this tech center which it is. We have Kodak, Xerox, Bausch and Lomb were all founded and still have offices here, but there's a large section of the population that is very poor. Average city-wide household income is about 29,000.

Christi:     Okay, that's interesting. I guess when you were on tour ... I don't know how long you've been in the city but when it was in more of a decline, that kind of before that the revolution of the downtown area. What were some of the major challenges? Do you feel like that kind of precipitated more challenges that you didn't expect?

Employee:     I think what we have still ... I've been here since 2007 but I knew the former person in the position, but I think some of the challenges ... They were on us, but they were more on police and fire with houses being vacated and vacant houses. Lots more calls for police service and fire service and drug houses and those kinds of things because of the fact that people ...

     People were leaving neighborhoods and we couldn't ... The city couldn't tear down the dilapidated houses quick enough. The city was built for 330,000 people, that's what the population was in the late 50s, early 60s, and now the population is just over 200,000. We have a lot of housing stack that hasn't been kept up but a demand isn't there.

     Since I got here, I'm assuming that we've demoed somewhere in the neighborhood of 30,000 to 40,000 homes and continued to have a program that does in

the neighborhood at 200 to 300 a year as we take them for foreclosure or whatever. Some of the issues that we have on the operation side are people not paying water bills and out of town landlords who really don't pay attention to their properties.

A real detriment to the neighborhood because they're not watching their homes or taking care of them and it makes it ... People who actually want to live in the neighborhood end up either moving somewhere else or get discouraged because we can't get these dead beat landlords basically to maintain their properties. [crosstalk 00:20:05]

Christi:     So what are some of the things that you've been ...

Employee:     It's kind of the facts. Not to say that we don't have some great areas that are booming in the city, area in the south, the wedge, which was even 20 years ago just wasn't the place that a lot of people want to be. It's hard to buy a house over there. It's kind of the place where all of the young people want to go and retails come back and all those kind of things. It's not that we don't see areas where it's happening, it's just not happening at all in all sectors.

Christi:     As you kind of go through these changes, have you been trying to communicate a specific message to the existing residence to get them to stay or to new residents to entice them in?

Employee:     I think we don't do enough for that. I think actually Mayor Menino, former Mayor Menino from Boston was here. We have the speaker series for our Downtown Development Council and he talked about how he just drove around said, "The city is great. It's clean and all those kind of things. You really need to promote that." I don't think we do enough of that with the city.

People only hear about the problems with the schools and those kinds of things and still we draw people downtown into some of these neighborhoods just because they're neat places to be. We could do a better job of promoting the city.

Christi: I guess to kind of turn on to a positive thing, in the research that I've been doing, I have four cities that I'm looking at across the US and some of them, all of them I'm guessing are kind of struggling from the central city place, but then some have really active citizens within their community and some have not there yet because citizens in Rochester is a community that has this ...

Population is waning, but then the citizens are rated as some of the most active and engaged within their community in the United States. Do you have any guess as to what ...

Employee: I would disagree with that.

Christi: Really?

Employee: Yeah. No, we have very engaged citizens. For some projects, we've had ... Well, we're pushing, we just started since 2011 we started hitting bike lanes in the city and there's a very strong bike advocacy group. We're trying to take that kind of the next level, do bike boulevards. We're kind of using neighborhood streets where we can't find safe passages down arterial streets.

We had a meeting [five degree days 00:23:06] a couple months ago. We've had 80 people out for a meeting we are expecting 20 at the most. People are passionate about wanting the bike lanes, they want to ride their bikes in the city. They

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want us to be plowing the trails that we have. We find that kind of passion spilling over into charitable things and working with youth and those kinds of things.

There is a lot of engagement. There's a whole group that is trying to restore the transit system. We used to have a rail system to went about nine miles north up to the lake and back. Some people have talked about what do we do to redo that and what do we do to bring some kind of urban rail back into the city center. There are people that are very passionate about downtown and its architecture and keeping it thriving.

Christi:		I think I mixed my words. What I was trying to say is that Rochester does have active citizens.

Employee:	You did, that's what you said. I think I was just giving examples of what we have.

Christi:		I thought you said you disagreed and I was ...

Employee:	I agree that yes we do. Those were just examples of what I see and I think there's ... We've always been a very strong city as far as contributions to pretty much anything but our annual fund drives for United Way and all those kinds of things are typically very high level of participation from city residents.

Christi:		What do you think ... Do you think that's just kind of the nature of the beast or do you think that there is something that the city is doing to encourage that and to keep it going?

Employee:	I think it probably started with George Eastman. A long time ago, he made all that money with the cameras but he built a theater here in the city and he

started the Center for Governmental Research to try and make government better. They're still around today. It was called something else when he founded it.

He started that corporate kind of giving thing and Xerox and Bausch and Lomb kind of followed suit. All of them are much less than they were and none of them are actually even headquartered here anymore, but the employees of those organizations who have been on to farm other smaller organizations have that spirit that you have to give back to the community that you live in and all that kind of thing.

I think that's where a lot of that comes from. Certainly an attitude that ... I grew up here but I think it's just something that's almost taken for granted is that we're going to try and take care of people the best that we can and contribute in whatever way we can even if we have this program that the city they called clean sweep where we went to the fore sectors of the city and spend a day just cleaning up neighborhoods.

We would get somewhere between 500 and 800 people out for these events that started with breakfast in the morning in a big tent, went out and work till noon and then we'd feed them all lunch. We have a bunch of projects lined up and we've been doing that for six years now and the program is kind of moving into a one big event just because of logistics, but we're going to end up doing that in connection with the baseball game with our local team here.

Yes, the city is promoting it through those kinds of things I guess, but it is pretty much ingrained culturally I think in the Rochester area.

Christi:        As I come to the end of my questions, I kind of have the last open ended one of what are the things that are most important for me to know about Rochester and the city and the way that you communicate or any of the above.

Employee:       The most important thing to know. I think there has been, I don't know certainly since I've got here, there's a very positive attitude about the direction of the city going forward. Part of that is some of the projects I think that we have been doing. We had one of the first indoor malls which happen to be in the city, Midtown Plaza. It was built in the 60's and it was a big deal at the time and then kind of got ...

Once all the suburban malls started coming up, not many people came downtown. We've kind of taking that eight acre coverage space, split it back up into urban streets and its being repopulated with businesses and houses and projects like that and us filling of the inner loop that's kind of reconnect our neighborhood with downtown.

A really kind of transformational and I think people are really feeling some positive energy around that. For the last 10 years, we've had a jazz fest that is ... I think it's second or third in the country as far as attendance and the [acts 00:29:04] are here. It's a two week event in June. We get everybody from ... It's not just jazz actually, it's anybody from David Byrne to St. Vincent to all kinds of different types of acts that come to this jazz fest. We get 10,000 people downtown outside for these some free concerns and some are paid.

Every weekend here there's some kind of festival or celebration, neighborhood festivals. Some have been going for 20 to 30 years and we just started two years ago to have a fringe festival which has been very successful. That happens in the

fall and there's a group called Garden Aerial who has been doing echo fest and they're trying to get the neighborhood adjacent to city hall here, turned into what's called an echo district kind of a no net loss of energy area and kind of a mindset for an area to be sustainable.

I think there's a couple out in Portland and maybe there's one in the Midwest and we sort of like doing that, so I think there's a lot of things that are happening in the city that are making people start to think about it again as something other than no retail, all those kind of things. The bars in those kinds of things are definitely coming back and there's a grocery store that's going to be coming back into downtown, something we haven't had for a long time.

Those kind of things I think are really changing the attitude about downtown and the new mayor is kind of focused on how do we get all the people in the city that are not doing well, how do we get them working and back becoming taxpayers and responsible citizens and all those of kind of things. Part of that obviously is jobs but it's also training and making sure that they graduate from high school.

A long answer to your short question. Sorry.

Christi:          No, that's perfect. This is great. It's all good information. That kind of wraps up all of my questions. I have your email, so definitely I'll shoot you an email with some information and then as kind of you're hitting about the middle of my process of going through all the interviews, but once that gets down, I'm hoping to put together kind of the ...

Obviously, that will be the end report, but that's like a two stage kind of fancy summary of the things that I've learned and kind of help to share the practices between all the communities that I talked to, so a little reward for spending 15 or 20 minutes with me.

Employee:     No, it's kind of always interesting to have to think about these things because you kind of just move through your job and when you think about them ... Obviously in the beginning of our conversation, a very negative boat, now I'm actually pretty excited about the things that we're doing. The more you've actually think about how far we've come even in the past four or five years, it's pretty exciting.

Christi:     Yeah, it sounds like really cool stuff. I'm going to have to take a road trip and visit all these cities that I've never been to [crosstalk 00:32:49].

Employee:     I think it's the second week of June is when Jazz Fest is here. It is a great time to be here and there is plenty of shows you can get into for $15 or $20. You can see some great ... We have jazz artists from the Finland, Norway, France, pretty much everywhere come here and there's whole venue setup for Nordic Jazz or English groups or that kind of thing.

It is a great event and we have some great architecture here. There's churches and other cool buildings where they have the Jazz Fest events, so you get to see some lead venues as well. So if you're going to come, that would be a great time to come up. Anytime other than January and February when it's like five degrees or at least it was [crosstalk 00:33:47].

Christi:     That's a sure. Yes, and this year has been even rougher. All right.

Employee:    But, hey, now it's going to be over 25 for at least the next days, so we're pretty excited up here.

Christi:    I grew up in Chicago but do see a lot of time there for me in the winter. All right, thanks again for [crosstalk 00:34:12].

Employee:    Okay, sure. Any other questions, feel free to shoot me an email or call and good luck with your studies.

Christi:    Okay, great. Thank you.

Employee:    Okay, thanks.

**Appendix 12. Interview Transcript: Rochester 3**

Speaker 1:    Okay. That mixing is much easier for me, I don't have to be scribbling and trying to have a conversation with you at the same time. I just have a handful of questions here for you. I've been communicating with several different cities across the United States looking at the challenges that they've had within urban planning and then also how that relates to the way that they're communicating with their residents to get the residents involved in the community activity.

You're actually my last one from Rochester. I guess first, if you could just explain a little bit about what your role is in the government there.

Speaker 2:    Sure. I'm the assistant to the director of communications. Communications Bureau is part of the mayor's office. My role is to support the director of communications who's accountable for the public information for the City of Rochester, New York.

Her role as director is to act as the spokesperson for the mayor. My role supports all the functions that go along with that, providing quotes, setting up news conferences, doing media relations … We also have an … We're also an in-house service bureau. We do have a printed literature, so we have graphic designers on staff.

We have writers. We issue the news releases for the city. We produce television. We produce radio, the city's government access … Television channel is managed by us. As my role as assistant to the director is just to make sure everybody has what they need and just support the function overall. I prepare the departmental budget

and [being 00:15:50] counter of the department just to make sure everybody has what they need, personnel liaison for the bureau … That's it in a nutshell.

Speaker 1:     Okay. Interesting. In general, the messages that the city is communicating to residents, are there common themes or things that you're always trying to get residents to understand?

Speaker 2:     As far as message goes, no, we're pretty reactive to … We're a reactive bureau, so we get to deal with the good and the bad. Anything from the public safety and violence to children planting flowers at the park. We get to deal with both the whole spectrum of communication needs.

As far as pushing a message out that we're trying to get people to, occasionally, that comes to mind, things like during snow emergencies when we need folks to move their cars … That kind of thing. We'll try and do motorist advisories when streets are closed, things like that. I guess I'm not quite what you're getting at on that question and I'm not quite sure.

Speaker 1:     No, that's helpful. I know some communities have certain platforms that they're pretty much always pushing out and then they try it on.

Speaker 2:     The mayor has their own priorities that they obviously … We do the speech writing for the mayor as well, so obviously, we develop the themes and priorities that the administration tries to convey. We have public safety obviously, economic development, education and neighborhood and business development.

Speaker 1:     Okay.

Speaker 2:     Those kind of themes. We do have those stump speeches that we do deliver.

Speaker 1:     Right. Yes. Yes, that's helpful. That makes sense. What are some of the tools that you're using to communicate with residents?

Speaker 2:     Since we're responsible, we're accountable for the city's website. In my opinion, the city's website is the most cost-effective marketing tool that the city has. We can reach … We get quite high traffic. Our traffic numbers on the web are fairly high, so I think to me, that's the best way to … most cost-effective way to reach a lot of people as to the city's website.

We also administer the city's social media account, so we are quite busy on Facebook and social media. I'm sure Patrick [Flanigan 00:19:11] went in depth about those efforts. Then, we issue 500 and something news releases, so we rely on our media outlets. Each year, we're about 550 news releases.

We conduct news conferences that are pretty well attended, so any time the mayor wants to hold the press conference, we can pretty much guarantee that we're going to get all the media that come to City Hall and hear what she has to say.

Speaker 1:     Okay. Yes, and you're right, Patrick and I had some great conversations about social media and the things that he's embarking at. That was a great reference there.

Speaker 2:     Right. We also have our government [FS 00:19:59] television channel so we can promote programs and services on the Time Warner Cable … our cable channel 12.

Speaker 1:     Okay. Are there certain things that are being done to try and engage citizens and get them more involved in government communication and brainstorming and activities?

Speaker 2:     By law, a lot of the projects that the city performs or completes, their public input is mandatory on many publically funded projects. Frequently, there's public meetings that the … and Communications Bureau is responsible for publicizing those meetings, for noticing those meetings to the media.

Every week, we issue a public meeting news release that includes all the public meetings, whether it's a city council meeting or a meeting that are going repave a certain street in a neighborhood. There's frequent public meetings, frequent city council meetings, boards and commissions planning commission, zoning, preservation … Those are all noticed through the media and through the city's website.

We are mandatory that we include public input on many of these projects. We have a redevelopment in the heart of downtown, an eight-acre site that's being redeveloped. It's right in the heart of Maine Street. It's historic, and how often do you get the chance to redevelop eight acres of your core of downtown? Part of that is creating new streets, new open space and we had a public, not a contest, but we solicited suggestions for names, so name 'Midtown' … It's called the 'Midtown Rising Redevelopment'.

We received over 330 submissions for naming a new street. A new infrastructure was built there, so we're announcing this week that we're naming a street and naming a new open space plaza based on submitted names from the public. We did a

social media campaign, we built an online web form for folks to submit. There are

suggestions.

As they come, as the need arises, we tailor it. We have our program called

'Rochester's Clean Sweep' that is a citywide cleanup program, spring cleaning program.

What we'll do is we engaged the community to approach us and say, "Hey. What do you

want to work on? Do you need flowers? Do you need malts? Is there a particular plot of

land that you want to turn into a garden? Do you want to clean this street?", and we'll

supply tools, t-shirts, gloves, rakes and shovels, and we'll set up groups with all the tools

they need, the materials to beautify their neighborhoods. That's a citywide effort that

happens every spring, and that's a pretty big one for us.

We have a registration process that we pump through social media and on

the city's website. Folks can sign up online. Yes, it's pretty robust community

engagement.

Speaker 1:     Okay. That's great. That's great. I think you mentioned something

that I had talked to one of your colleagues about this development project in the

downtown where you're doing the redesign there.

Speaker 2:     Yes.

Speaker 1:     Is that … One of the things that I've been talking with several of

the cities is about population change, moving away from the central city and out to the

edges or even to the suburban areas, and that really changes how a city has to function. Is

that something that you've noticed within Rochester as well?

Speaker 2:     Absolutely. I mean, we've experienced from the '70s on to the '80s and '90s a population decline. The interesting thing about our city is that downtown residents in the core of downtown is experiencing a spike there. We can't keep up with demands for downtown residents, so development is been very robust on downtown lofts and [flats 00:25:15] and apartments and townhomes and condos in the center city.

You'll see in Rochester, New York an abundance of redeveloped historic architecture, architectural buildings being restored beautifully and turned into residential property. In that regard, our downtown residences are growing. The rest of the city as we were built for, we were a city that was built for a million people and our population is about 200,000 now, so you have all the problems that go along with that as for vacancies and urban blights and things like that.

Yes, we do have our share of poverty and those kind of issues that we're dealing with, but our center city is on the upswing after a long period of decline.

Speaker 1:     Interesting. From a communication perspective, how has the population changes influenced some of the information that you've tried to get out to residents?

Speaker 2:     It's hard to draw a line between population and communications. I mean, in the past, we're more … Communications was much more of a paper-driven … We were paper producers. We produce fliers and brochures and pamphlets and mutters, and now we are much more multimedia, I mean with mobile devices and online and television, radio …

We've become much more of a multimedia platform. We're trying to as best as we can be where the community is as far as online. Yes, we definitely changed our paradigm from a print-driven shop, although we still do employ three graphic designers, two and a half and a part-time. Two full-time graphic designers and a part-time.

I mean, even though we've shifted away from print, believe it or not, the demand has not gone down for graphic design. I mean, you still need to design advertisements, you still need to design for the web and for mobile and for print. The literature still exists, so the jury is still out on whether newspapers and magazines are on their way out. I mean, everybody, it seem to be a common theme that says, "Everything is online now, but our experience has been that there still has quite the demand for literature."

As far as population and communication needs, it's hard to gauge that. I mean, I don't really … Our media has stayed the same, the media that we deal with. It hasn't really affected ... I guess I would have to say, it hasn't affected us in any other way than scale. In other words, if we are a city of a million people, our scale of communications would be much greater than it would be for a city of 200,000 ...

Speaker 1:     I see.

Speaker 2:     … or had to adapt to the way the nature of the change of how people are communicating online versus print.

Speaker 1:     Okay. That makes sense. When you're looping back to some of the good and bad reactive scenarios that your office has to deal with, when you're dealing

with the situation where it's a negative … [I mean during 00:29:23] negative situation, what are some of the things that you or your office has to focus on in resolving those issues?

Speaker 2:     Obviously, we want to make sure that the organization is consistent in telling the single story so that … I mean, it'd be a nightmare to have a chief of police saying one thing and the mayor is saying another, and the commissioner of another department is saying another. We rely on a centralized kind of policy where all communications is centered in the communications department.

The mayor and senior management all know to send media to communications, so there's a city policy to say that media requests get channeled through the Communications Bureau, so that the mayor's message is conveyed consistently across the organization. During times of crisis or negative news, the stature of the director of communications really elevates so people …

Obviously, you got a guy who … Let's just take for example a Commissioner of Public Works, in our case it's called 'Environmental Services'. There's a water main break and a giant sinkhole in the street. They're not used to dealing with media, and media questions, so they rely, they come to the communications director to say, "What should I be saying? How do I respond?", and the communications director provides counsel and advice on what to say, what not to say.

That's the role of communications is just to make sure that consistent messages are being [dominated 00:31:32].

Speaker 1:     Sure. Sure. This is great .This is great. I guess one final wrap up is what are some things that you can share with me that I should know about your organization or the communication practices there in general?

Speaker 2:     Things that you should know about the City of Rochester or this Communications Bureau or …? I mean I guess, can you be a little more specific?

Speaker 1:     Yes, kind of both or … Then, going through all this information, what's the key takeaway that I should take from our conversation? What are some things maybe I haven't asked about that I should know about?

Speaker 2:     I mean, cities … I mean, this is broader than just the Communications Bureau, but it should be the mission or all cities to grow their [tax base 00:32:30], to … I mean all cities work … Rochester is not alone in the experience of suburban flight. All cities should be working on growing their [tax base 00:32:45], pulling people back in, working on "How can we get more residents to come back into the city?"

The Communications Bureau should be chief among the tools to make that happen, to show the good things, to tell the good story of the city, the things that are great about Rochester, street life, sidewalk plowing, curbside [refuse 00:33:20] pickup, street sweeping, vitality …

It's our job as the Communications Bureau to show off the city, although we don't have a tourism and convention function, I mean, there's no one dedicated to selling the city. It really is our job to fill that role to make sure that the city is always

moving forward and being progressive as it can, and just being portrayed as a great place to live for and raise a family type thing.

The Communications Bureau is critical to telling that story to helping cities grow their [tax bases 00:34:15].

Speaker 1:     Okay. That was great. That was a great [laugh 00:34:21] there. You gave me a lot of good things that I can use. That was perfect.

Speaker 2:     Great.

Speaker 1:     Moving forward from here, my goal is to put the other summary of all the things that I've collected from all these different cities and folks that I've talked to as I'm now getting towards the end of getting the [attachments 00:34:44] together and I'd be happy to share that with you if you're interested.

Speaker 2:     I love that, yes.

Speaker 1:     Okay. Great. Thanks again for taking the time to chat with me this morning. Sorry about the scheduling confusion, and I have your email so I'll stay in touch over that if that works.

Speaker 2:     You're welcome. Yes. I look forward to it.

Speaker 1:     Okay. Thanks, [Ted 00:35:05].

Speaker 2:     Great. Thanks.

**Appendix 13. Interview Transcript: St. Louis 1**

Christi:          Are you still there?

Employee:     Yep.

Christi:          Okay. Got it. Good. [inaudible 00:00:07] This is great. I've got my list of questions that I want to chat with you about, but then I also know we had talked about maybe getting me some contact info for some other folks at the city.

Employee:     Yeah. I'll grab a couple of those people that I think that ... perhaps somebody from our neighborhood stabilization would be good.

Christi:          Okay.

Employee:     Neighborhood stabilization and/or police.

Christi:          Okay.

Employee:     You got it.

Christi:          We can jump into my questions then. It's only a handful of them and we'll just kind of see where the conversation goes.

Employee:     Sure. Of course.

Christi:          First, can you tell me a little bit about the role that you play within the government?

Employee:     Yes. My official title is Director of Communications for Mayor Slay, and I do handle all media calls, press releases, press events, etc., that have to do with the mayor; and because the mayor is essentially the CEO of the city, it all kind of trickles up in this case.

We do have public information officers over various departments including the health department and the police department where sometimes they have some of the largest call volume in addition to myself, so they will kind of handle things on their own but always keep me in the loop or come to me when it has to deal with high-level messaging or policy procedures.

Christi:       Okay. Good. I know we talked a little bit about that last week.

Employee:     Yeah.

Christi:       From your position, what are some of the key messages that you're kind of always going back to communicate with residents?

Employee:     It's very, very broad. Anything that has to do with moving a city forward and running a city would be kind of included in that umbrella. So everything from the mayor's priorities of education and public safety are the top 2.

It's always what we're doing, too, to essentially accomplish those goals. Today I'm writing a press release for the mayor's Youth Violence Prevention Task Force, and we'll be holding a seminar on Thursday morning where we're inviting press and the public to attend this to find out not only what we have going on, but how they can get involved so that it's not just government doing all the work, but it's some of these community foundations and neighborhood organizations that are getting involved as well.

We might be the ringleaders of a project, for example, but need other people to take the lead and take a piece of this major project that we have. It's a comprehensive document of how to reduce violence, how to intervene before youth, for

example, become violent. If they do, how we dole out that punishment, and then how we re-enter, get them back into society successfully so that they don't re-offend.

Those are different little nuggets of how we would move this forward. Always looking at how to communicate what's going on.

But then it's also how you get around town. Are there street closures that are going to impact your commute? Are the Cardinals and the Blues and the Rams playing on the same day? Yes, it's done here in St. Louis. We often go into what we call Red October, because the Cardinals are playing into the post season at the same time that the Blues are playing, and the Rams are starting their season, so, is there something you need to know about getting around town? Or what's going on this weekend? Or what sort of activities can you get involved in?

All these things are kind of what make your world go around; and I try, as communications director, to make sure that people have all that information at their fingertips.

Christi:  What are some of the primary tools that you use when you're trying to communicate with residents?

Employee:  Primarily, we go through media. Being director of communications, we first and foremost go through media, because they have the greatest reach.

Our TV stations, our newspapers, our radio stations are our primary reach. If we have something that's high level and that we need to get out right away, we go to those media outlets knowing that most of our residents will either catch the news, hear it

on [camalex 00:05:04]on the way into work, or pick up the paper that day or go to the paper's website. That's 1.

Two, is the city's website, stlouis-mo.gov, where we put out various articles.

Three, is mayorslay.com, which is specific to the mayor and his initiatives and his goals.

Four, is kind of on top of that, like blogs, social media, Twitter, Facebook, and the like. The mayor has ... hold on, I'll tell you. I know that I have about 34-3500 followers; well, the mayor, Mayor Slay, has 26,000 followers. That's kind of an interesting way that is changing for us and changing the way that we do business, because it's more of a direct pipeline to a resident.

We also send things out. We have various ways of communicating whether its bringing fliers to community meetings or having people sign up on Email Blast to find out what's going on in the city, or, again, we kind of go through social media to send out links to like a Newsgram or a flier of something that's coming up or that's happening in your neighborhood.

Christi: Have you seen residents be more responsive to a particular type, a particular platform, or they kind of ... just in general?

Employee: I think what we see the most is over Twitter and Facebook. But in all fairness, it can be a tough thing to gauge if you're sending out an Email Blast or you're putting something on TV, newspaper, or radio, because you're not necessarily the one

there to garner how many calls came into the newsroom on that, or how many comments did somebody make on a post?

I may read something, but I'm not inclined to make a comment on a TV station or a newspaper's website. But on Twitter or Facebook, there seems to be more personal interaction. We tend to see that a little bit.

If the mayor posts something on his Facebook page, for example, it's often a good gauge of kind of what constituents think. People say, "Great! Keep up the good work" or "Hey, did you think about this?" or "I think that's a terrible idea because ..., " whatever the case may be. But we tend to see that more on social media, and I think it's just kind of the nature of social media that people have an opinion and are willing to put it out there, and that's kind of how they communicate.

It seems like whenever we've done that, specifically calling for your thoughts or opinions on something, that it's really garnered some attention.

I'll give you a quick example. We had a really awful snowstorm. In the city of St. Louis, we don't make a habit of plowing side streets. We plow the major thoroughfares and then the secondaries to kind of get you to those major thoroughfares, and we do hill routes, but St. Louis is an old city with a lot of narrow streets. Many of them are one-way with cars parked on both sides. Many of our homes don't have garages, so people rely on street parking.

Well let me tell you, it's real difficult to get a plow down a street like that. So we asked people. We said, "Hey, we want to hear from you. Let us know if you want

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us to come up with a plan to plow side streets, or do you want to fight it out and dig your car out and get on your way?"

We asked people, "Please weigh in." We did so through our Citizens Service Bureau, which is another interesting tool to communicate with residents. It's a city number that is staffed and also has a Twitter handle and a Facebook page and you can log it through our city's website, where you can make a complaint of any kind, whether it's ... and we used it in this case for snow plowing, saying, kind of cast your vote. Do you want snow plowing or do you not on these city side streets, in particular?

We also hear like "a tree in my tree lawn," which is the city's responsibility, "is dead. I need a replacement." Or "This stop sign is crooked" or "There's graffiti on this building, and it's on city property." You name it. "I saw a stray dog. Can you please come pick him up?" "My dumpster got skipped this time."

If you can think of it that has to deal with the city's service, you can call and lodge a complaint with the city, and we will close that complaint within 3 days. "I have a pothole in my street." We'll get out there and fix it within 3 days. I think that's a pretty interesting tool that we have.

Christi:       Yeah.

Employee:     A different strategy of communicating, not just communicating what's specifically going on as an initiative of the city, but also how can we make your life better?

Christi:       Yeah, for sure. So is that something ... ? You call it a call line, you mentioned, but can someone just Tweet at an address and it logs it that way, too?

Employee:     Yeah. Exactly. You can do ... And they will respond right back on Twitter and say, "You're noted, and here's your case number, and it'll be out there in 3 days." And then 3 days goes by and somebody ... they can kind of check up on us and say, "Hey, here's my case number. It still hasn't been fixed." But lucky for us, they always are (laughs).

Christi:     Have you seen conversations kind of start to happen between residents and your social media platform?

Employee:     Absolutely. There might be something where myself or the mayor or chief of staff or somebody sends out a Tweet, and maybe it's kind of a high-level idea. Maybe it's something that's going on in other cities of what would this look like in St. Louis? Would St. Louis be up for something like this, for example.

Then people can kind of weigh-in and say, "I think it's a great idea" or "I think it's terrible" or "That wouldn't work here" or "Hey, that's exactly what we need here," whatever the case may be, and we kind of get a gauge.

Now, grant it, as you know, some people are more vocal on social media than others, and kind of going back to our snow plow poll, if you will, I would run into people just anecdotally out at the grocery store, at the restaurant, or whatnot. It did seem that they were a little bit older and a little bit of our older generation. They'd say, "To heck with snow plowing on the side streets. Don't do it. That would be a nightmare." "Hey, these kids these days, they just need to suck it up. Just dig it out and go."

But then you'd hear from younger folks, and they were often using social media to say, "Hey, I'm having a hard time getting my car out. I can't get down my

street." Now, grant it, we had a foot of snow in a matter of hours. It wasn't even 24 hours. I mean, it really dumped on us. That's kind of where all that originated, and we had subzero temperatures, so everything just stuck around way longer than it normally would here in the Midwest.

It kind of depends on the topic of when you kind of get people involved on social media, but, obviously, typically, we see a big of a younger generation taking to Twitter and Facebook to weigh-in on some of these thoughts.

Otherwise, sometimes I get handwritten letters or emails (laughs) from people saying, "Here are my 2 cents on it." One, I think, too, is the mayor ... It's just a policy here. Every single person who writes in gets a response from this office.

Christi:        Got you. That's interesting. One of the reasons that I picked St. Louis is there's actually a study that came out last year from the American Community Volunteer Service within the federal government that residents in St. Louis are some of the most active within their community of anywhere in the United States. Is that something that you've observed?

Employee:      Yeah, we're pretty proud of that. I think that some of it is our Midwest values, frankly, but we do seem to have a lot of buy-in from our community. I'll give you an example. We have a really strong neighborhood ownership model. What it is like a Neighborhood Watch program on steroids. It's not just like putting a sign up and saying hi to your neighbor and knowing that Joey and Susan are out of the town for the weekend. It's taking it a step further than that.

Neighborhoods, and it's very specific, you'll set up a neighborhood call group, and neighbors can then individually sign up to be part of an email chain, and they all have each other's phone numbers and addresses, and really as much as they want to disclose. If they want to disclose where they work or if they happen to travel a lot for work, or they work a 9-5, or they work second shift, they can disclose whatever they feel comfortable with their neighbors.

And then it's a way for neighbors to kind of keep a better eye on one another. Also, when they see something amiss, they can get that information out directly to their neighbors; so "Hey, you know what? I saw a red pickup truck that I've never seen on our street before, and the guy was kind of walking around and kind of looked like he didn't belong. Any of you know this person?"

Someone might say, "Oh, yeah, he was doing work on my house." Or someone might say, "Oh, I saw that too, and it raised a red flag." They're encouraged to call police all the time, and they work really well with police. Police will actually come train them to be civilians on patrol.

Now they never, ever do anything where they would catch a bad guy. But let's say they did see a bad guy. Let's say they did see somebody walking into a garage or a back yard or something of that nature. They are trained to immediately call the police, and they're trained on what specifically police need. How to give the best possible description. What sort of things to look out for.

They also do things, like little ... something that's even simpler than that. Do you have any graffiti? Do you have any street lights that are out? Do you have a tree

that's dead? Do you have a neighbor's home that was foreclosed on and now all of a sudden the grass is too high and you need to board up windows?

If you can name it, if you can think of a problem that might be in a community, they will work together to then bring city resources in to help. The importance of that is, like that broken window theory, so that if bad guys see a broken window in a house that shows that somebody doesn't care about that house, or maybe nobody's watching that house, then that's a place for them to set up shop and do bad things, or to break into that home to steal whatever's left, that sort of theory. So this is to stop all of that.

Then it goes a step further. Let's say that you do catch a bad guy. Let's say you do have a burglar in your neighborhood. Now all these neighbors will get together and write victim impact statements for the judge, so that when this guy gets convicted, and a judge before might only give him probation or time served or something, because it was a burglary and nobody really came forward because they've already replaced their stuff through insurance or whatever.

No, these neighbors are now coming forward and saying, "Hey, we don't want a jerk like this lurking around our neighborhood." So it's gotten much stronger sentences for bad guys, and they've also been able to get restraining orders against these guys. "Hey, if you've offended in my neighborhood, then we don't want you back here." So a judge will say, "You're not welcome in North Hampton. You cannot go within the borders of this neighborhood. Period. Ever. And if you do, if you're even caught there, you're in violation of your restraining order."

Christi:          That's great. Very cool.

Employee:       That's another kind of interesting outreach that we have with communities. And then through those communities, we can say ... We have another project called Operation Brightside. They do graffiti removal from private buildings and public buildings, or properties, I should say, not just buildings, but property.

They do blitzes, like neighborhood cleanups. They'll provide tulips for free, so neighbors can all plant together. When these big old trees shed their leaves, they'll do big cleanup days, and then we'll send out city street crews to do leaf pickup, and we'll send out these blasts through, again, through social media, Facebook, and also through the neighborhood ownership models and say, "Hey, we're blitzing your neighborhood this weekend. Come out and help." It gives people a day that they can set aside to go do something like that.

Christi:          Sure. Sure. That's very cool.

Employee:       Yeah.

Christi:          We'll kind of shift things, because you hit on a lot of my questions here, which is perfect. When there's something negative that the city needs to respond to whether it's not really so much an incident, but more from an urban [inaudible 00:19:31] perspective, if there's a development that's coming in that's bad, or population changes around the community and the neighborhood is suffering, how do you ... what are your tactics for communicating about those things?

Employee:       This all comes under the direction of the mayor. He's an open and honest guy; therefore, his entire administration is open and honest, and we tell you the

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truth. If it's not all puppy dog tails and rainbows and roses, so be it. We have to deal with it.

But we've had, the city of St. Louis over the past 50-60 years or so, has seen an incredible population decline. But it's not necessarily through any direct fault of the city. It's people's lifestyles.

We have small homes that are very close together. When suburbia, again, kind of across the country started blooming, people were going out and building their big mansions on acres and acres of land. It was a big reason to move out.

When a company moved out because they needed to expand, then a lot of their workers went with them. So some of our neighborhoods have seen 50-60 years of disinvestment largely on the city's north side.

We can talk about how that has impacted our community and what challenges it has left behind. We had a lot of white flight in the city of St. Louis, folks who moved out and kept moving west and kept moving west. Well, what happens is you leave all this great housing stock behind, and we're looking at ways of repopulating that.

The city just closed on a major incentive project for the north side regeneration project. That is a gentleman by the name of Paul McKee who came to the city with major redevelopment plans for 2 square miles on the city's north side to repopulate it, to improve infrastructure, to bring businesses, to create more affordable housing all within this 2-square mile footprint.

That's where the city can say, "Here are the challenges that we have faced over the years, but here's what we're doing to fix it." I think that every time that you do

have a problem, you have to own up to you. You have to lay it out there what the problem is and what you're going to do to fix it.

I'll give you another example. We had 2 parks employees, senior parks employees, who were federally indicted for just chipping away, little pieces here and there, and stealing from the city. They had some scheme going with offering up contracts, or something of this nature, and then they would take part of the money for themselves.

These are 2 senior guys. Well, that looks terrible. That's exactly what we said, "This is terrible. We want the judge to throw the book at them." We immediately started firing them. It wasn't, "Oh, well, let's wait and see." Uh-uh. "Get out. You have no business being in city government. People ... you're in a leadership position. Taxpayers are supposed to respect and trust you, and you have broken both of those."

So, a) Get out; b) We hope the judge throws the book at you; c) And orders restitution; and d) We are going to look at every possible loophole to find out how this happened. We asked the US Attorney, "Could we have prevented this?" "Could we have caught this?" "Could we have seen this coming sooner?" And the answer to all of it was, "No." That kind of made us go, "Well, shoot ... " It can't be no. Can we do anything better?

So we put together a small task force of people, if you will, to find out how did they do this so that it cannot happen again? And that's exactly what we did.

Every time there is something that's negative, I think you have to own up to it and then move on from it. Part of owning up to it, too, is explaining why we do or do

not do something that might be under attack or questioned. Some of it might be money. It takes a lot of money to tear down buildings.

We have some ... Now grant it, thank God we're not as bad as Detroit, but we do have some, like any [rust boat 00:24:08]city in America these days ... I mentioned before, we have a housing staff to support 850-900,000 people, but now we only have 320,000 living in the city of St. Louis.

You can imagine that's left behind some homes. Well, if you have nobody living there and nobody caring about it, they're going to fall into disrepair. So what can we do as a city to save as many as possible but also take down the ones that are bad for neighborhoods, because ... Let me get back to my broken window theory.

If you've got a building that nobody is paying attention to, well, that's a beacon for a criminal to set up shop. So what can we do to identify those specific buildings and say, "All right, this one's got to come down because we know that guys are trying to sell drugs out of here. They're just hanging out at this house, and it's not their house." So, we'll take those down. It costs a lot of money to do that.

Sometimes they'll say, "Well, why can't you take down more buildings?" Well, let me put it in perspective for you. It costs 'x' amount of dollars to take down a house. We allot 'y' amount of dollars to do so. But are you willing to pay for that instead of ... because that's what it comes ... We have a finite number of dollars in our budget; and with public safety being our top priority, here are our choices.

Christi:       Well, I guess kind of my last catchall question is what, if anything, should I take away from this conversation that you want to make sure that I [inaudible 00:25:41] out St. Louis communication?

Employee:      I think, and this has just been my experience. I was a reporter for about a decade before I moved into the mayor's office. I just believe that honesty is the best policy. Good, bad, or indifferent, I really think the people have a right to know, especially when you're talking a government entity.

Here in the city, I work for you. I work for the taxpayers. We all in this office work for the taxpayers. We like public input. We like public questions, and we like being able to help people lead better lives.

The city government's job is simply to help facilitate that by providing good roads to drive on, safe infrastructure, good business opportunities, whatever the case may be. So anything that we can do to help make that better I think is the right way to go, and I think that from a communication standpoint, letting people know what their options are, what we're doing for them, how they can get involved are all paramount to moving a city forward.

Christi:       Great. Great. That's perfect. That covers all my questions. I can't thank you enough for squeezing me in so quickly today.

Employee:      Oh yeah. Absolutely. I understand it. I've been there too, so happy to help.

Christi:       I'm planning on over the next few months as I wrap things up, putting together kind of a [inaudible 00:27:24]-looking summary for all the folks that I

was able to chat with to share with you kind of what the other cities, how they responded to similar questions, and see if there's any good ideas to share with the group.

Employee:     Great. I'll be happy to take a look at that.

Christi:      I'll keep you on the list for emailing that out.

Employee:     Great. Thank you. I appreciate it, Christi.

Christi:      Yeah, sure. Do you want to coordinate over email once you have that recommendation for someone else for me to chat with or ... ?

Employee:     Yeah, that would be perfect. And I will try to line that up. This week is a little bit hairy, but I've got things Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday this week that really require a lot of my attention, but then I will try to either get it in by the end of the day. If not, then I'll return my focus to it on Friday.

Christi:      Okay, sure. Sounds great.

Employee:     All right. Great. We'll be chatting soon.

Christi:      Thanks.

Employee:     Okay. Take care. Bye-bye.

Christi:      Bye.

**Appendix 14. Interview Transcript: St. Louis 2**

Christi:        Hi there.  Is this Employee?

Employee:     Yeah, Employee.  Right.

Christi:        Hi.  How are you?

Employee:     Good.

Christi:        Good.  Thanks for making a few minutes for me this morning. This is going to be a huge help to me.

Employee:     Sure.  No problem.

Christi:        First I have to ask, and I want to make sure, are you okay if I record the call so that I can take notes at a later date?

Employee:     No, sure.  That's fine.

Christi:        Okay.  A little bit about what I'm working on.  I'm an urban planner in practice.  I've been doing that for about ten years.  I'm in school right now part-time to get a Masters Degree in Communication and Public Relations.  For my Master's thesis, I'm looking at how cities are communicating with their residents and working with residents to get them involved in different processes and being more active in the city. I've been talking to several folks from a few communities across the United States, planners, and communication people, to get a sense of how different cities are working in that area.  I've just got a handful of questions.  Shouldn't take but fifteen minutes or so.

Employee:     That's fine.

Christi:        I guess to start us off, can you tell me a little bit about your role?

Employee:     Yeah.  As far as communication with the public, my view would be fairly narrow compared with the entire city because we are the economic development arm for the city.  Our communication with the public would relate to specific development projects that might be contemplated.  Obviously, there are twenty-eight Aldermen that have all their individual communications with the citizens.  There's the mayor's office, which has a person that is specifically assigned to communication with the public.  They would be a much broader scope than I as far as communication with the general public.  Mine would only relate to development projects that are either planned or are ongoing.

Christi:     Sure.  That's perfect because actually [crosstalk 00:05:07].  Go ahead.

Employee:     Go ahead.

Christi:     I started with Maggie Crane from the major's office earlier this week, so I've-

Employee:     Oh, good.  Okay.

Christi:     I've got a handful of people from throughout the city that I'm gathering all their different perspectives.

Employee:     Sure.

Christi:     Your own perspective is great.

Employee:     Yeah.  Specifically, I'm involved in working with developers on public private partnerships with incentives that the city can offer a developer.  For one reason or another, we're not to the point yet that I would say we're a market-driven city.

As a result of that many, probably most, developers come to the city seeking some kind of an incentive, a partnership, if they are going to embark on a project in the city.

Christi: When you're reaching out to those different folks, is there any point throughout those processes where you engage residents to get their input on different things, or that residents might approach you?

Employee: There's public input built into the whole state statutes that authorize these incentives. Particularly if someone is seeking real estate tax abatement in the process, that requires an ordinance through the Board of Aldermen. It's required that we have a public hearing before one of the committees at the Board of Aldermen and we advertise that public hearing. We post notices of that public hearing. It gives an opportunity for anyone interested to come to that public hearing and comment on the specific project. That usually doesn't happen if we're talking about a simple little project. Our projects go anywhere from gut rehab of a house on up to multi-million dollar projects.

Very seldom would someone come in and have comment if a house in their neighborhood is about to be rehabbed, because they're obviously supportive of that. Unless they have some particular concern about that property, they probably would not voice their thought one way or another. When we do a much more major project, particularly if it's out in the neighborhood as opposed to downtown or in a big commercial area, there might be a great deal of public input. That might come at that public hearing, but it also might come in the form of calls that we would get, questions that we would get, etc.

The other incentive that I deal with a lot is tax increment financing. Again, the state statute calls for a public hearing. In that case it's not before a committee of the Board of Alderman, but rather before the TIF Commission that the city has set up. The TIF Commission itself consists of five people appointed by the mayor, two people representing the School Board, and another person representing other taxing districts in the city. Again, that public hearing is advertised, noticed in the newspaper, and ... The word gets out, so if it's ... Those tend to be larger projects. It's not unusual in major projects we might get quite a few people that would attend that public hearing.

We have a minority participation requirement with all of our incentives. Sometimes, particularly the TIF public hearings, involve people coming and wanting to make sure that their minority-owned company is going to have an opportunity to bid on the project. There may well be residents there too that are either in favor of the project or have some concerns about the project.

Christi: Once they come and they have their concerns, I guess normally it would be concerns that they are responding to, do you respond in that same forum, or do you take that back and, what's the process there?

Employee: The public hearing is somewhere the steps of actually approving legislation. The TIF Commission in the case of the TIF would hear those comments. The Aldermen of the ward in which the project is planned usually attends those hearings so he or she would hear those comments. Then it's up to them to weigh whether they think the comments would modify in any way the project. Often for larger projects, as I say, we have twenty-eight Aldermen. The larger projects it's not unusual, in fact it's

almost normal, that the Aldermen of the ward would have his or her own set of meetings

before it got very far with the residents of the area and talk about the project, have the

developer present it, and get neighborhood input before legislative is approved on a

particular project.

For example, we have one we're working on right now that just got

approval a week or so ago at the Board of Aldermen.  It's undergone a number of changes

as a result of the Aldermen working with her constituents and getting back to us and

altering the legislation that is going through the Board of Aldermen.  It's a twelve story

apartment building with retail on the first floor.  There was interest by the residents on

the design, on enough parking, on energy efficiency, and on just a whole range of things

that got addressed in that legislative process before the final vote came on a piece of

legislation that authorizes tax abatement for that particular project.

Christi:         That makes sense.  A lot of the cities that I think ...  St. Louise is

one of these that a lot of major cities in the US and a little bit around the world are having

this issue where the population is migrating out from the central city into the more

suburban areas.  Is that something that you have seen or encountered through your work?

Employee:      We have, although that's slowed down significantly to kind of a

trickle.  I think the last census we lost a thousand people, which is a pretty minor number.

We're seeing out-migration from certain neighborhoods, but then other neighborhoods are

having significant increase in population with new development going on.  Yes, there

certainly historically has been a lot of that, because as you probably have discovered back

in 1950 our population was around eight hundred and fifty thousand.  Now we're thirty

fifteen, three twenty, something like that. There's been a lot of out-migration through the years.

Christi: What are some of the things that you have been working on that kind of relate to that. Is that something that you're keeping in mind as you're preparing these incentives and working with your stakeholders.

Employee: Clearly any development that occurs in the city would be an attempt to arrest that out-migration. One thing that's interesting, though, and I don't know if it's out-migration, but what we are seeing now, which would essentially reduce the density in a lot of neighborhoods, is we're seeing many two-family buildings being converted to single-family residence and many four-family buildings being converted to two townhouses. Although the properties being converted in recent years have probably been empty, vacant, even so it reduces the number of units per square mile or whatever it might be in a given neighborhood.

I don't think our goal is ever to get back up to eight fifty, although the major has, and maybe Maggie mentioned it to you, has a sort of a what if situation. What if we could rebuild the city and get the population and get the population to say a half million. There are a lot of sections of the city that through disinvestment we have blocks with just two or three houses left in them. We have been working with a number of developers, and one particular, who has an approved taxing and financing project to try and rebuild those neighborhoods and create completely new residential stock by maintaining the few houses that are left if they're rehabable. Otherwise putting new infill housing in those blocks.

In that case, the few remaining residents that are there, mostly owner occupied houses, are concerned about what's happening around them and if anything is ever going to happen around them. We have a residents group in that area that we've been meeting with once a month just to work on their particular concerns, their particular needs. For example, one idea the developer had, because he controls a lot of this vacant land now, is in the interim before we really get something going, why don't we plant the land with food products. He found a minority not-for-profit that's kind of involved in that.

He's essentially leased or rented at no contest, or almost no cost, a lot of land to them so they could grow things on this land. A lot of the things last year that they grew they would up growing corn. I certainly thought that sounded like a reasonable idea, but when you meet with the residents that live in and among these lots that were planted last summer for corn, you realize that where they get off a bus and they walk two or three blocks to their house, before it was just open fields and they could easily see what was going on. When those fields are filled with six or eight foot high corn stocks, they have no idea whose is lurking around the corner. They find the corn is a liability in that respect in terms of safety.

Also then they have a whole bunch of mice and possum and all kinds of other things that are being attracted by this food, which they never had to deal with before either. The developer is rethinking. The idea of planting is probably good, but what should they plant? Should they plant things that are lower, and could whatever they plant be less attractive to certain animals. It's interesting to meet with residents like this

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because by and large they are senior citizens, but they have to be very hardy souls that they have survived and been willing to stay in a neighborhood that may be seventy percent or eighty percent of folks through the years have moved out of.  It's really incredible to work with a group like that.

Christi:         That's really interesting.  Maggie mentioned to me a customer service, Facebook, Twitter, hot line that the city has where residents can use that to send in a question or a complaint and then they get a response through that system.  Is that something that you ever had something come in that you then had to be the responder?

Employee:      If something has come into me through that, I probably was not aware that necessarily that was the avenue.  I know the city has that, but I don't have any direct connection with that.  It probably comes into an office, and then maybe someone in that office might ask me a question about this, that, or the other thing.  I would respond, and then they would in turn respond.  I don't have any direct connection with that, no.

What we do run, but it's a little bit off from what you're after, is what's called a business assistance center.  It's designed for primarily small little businesses in the city that need to get business licenses or whatever it may be.  They go to this office, and someone in that office takes them by the hand and leads them through whatever process it takes to get them off and going or to make whatever changes they need to make to their business whatever it may be.  Obviously, those business owners are constituents of the city, but you're thinking more in terms of residents probably than business owners.

Christi:         Sure, but that's interesting too.  I guess that's a different perspective, so that's good to know about.  Do you feel like or think that the work that

you're doing, kind of that revitalization or planning related work, is working into a larger message that the client is turning around? Like you said, the statistics are actually showing.

Employee: Yes, just by the number of people knocking on the door that want to do something. Obviously, what we're doing is kind of totally dependent upon a developer feeing that he can make a profit by doing something in the city. The fact that there all kinds of these people out there, and I think after the downturn in 08, 09, we're certainly seeing an upturn in all that. I think it's very positive. What I find really neat about it is that there are a lot of people out there that are buying derelict or poorly maintained residential property, sometimes commercial property, and putting their own sweat and equity into it.

These aren't major developers, not that we don't have some, but many of them are just someone that does maybe one or two of these a year, or four of these a year, and then turning them around and either selling them or in some cases renting them. We're just seeing a real uptake in that kind of thing going on. They maybe developers that live within the city, but it's not unusual they live who knows where within fifty, eighty, miles of here. Every now and then we see addresses over in Illinois or other places that they come in and work in the city.

We treasure most of the buildings we have in the city. We have a large stock of brick buildings. Whenever anyone asks for an incentive we hold them to a pretty high standard in terms of making sure that they're not doing anything that would degrade the basic design of the building and the materials used and all that sort of thing. We're

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just seeing a lot of that.  Then we're seeing a lot of major developments too.  A lot of those are being done by out of town developers.  They must feel pretty good about where we are economically in the city.  I don't think they would be willing to do forty, sixty, eighty, million dollar projects.

Most of those are concentrated in the central corridor of the city.  This is running from the river out to the city limits where Forest Park is, so there is maybe a mile wide, mile and a half wide, stretch in there going from the river out to the edge from east to west where most of the really major projects are going.  There are projects going beyond that, but they tend not to be the eighty million dollar projects.  They tend to be smaller scale kinds of projects.

Christi: That wraps up most of my questions.  I guess the last thing I'll like to ask is if there's anything that you thought of that I didn't hit on or something that I should know or what should I take away from this?

Employee: No, I think we've probably touched on most things.  I can't think of anything else that would probably be helpful to you.

Christi: Great.  I have your email address so I will email you some information over the next few months.  I'm going to try and summarize what I've found from all these different cities and then share it.

Employee: Yeah, it's always good to hear what other cities are doing and how we fit in.

Christi: Yeah, for sure.  Thank you so much for squeezing me in, especially so quickly.  This has been a great-

Employee:     No problem.

Christi:     Have a great day.

Employee:     Okay, you too, Christi.  Bye.

Christi:     Bye.

**Appendix 15. Interview Transcript: St. Louis 3**

Christi:        Okay, well …

Employee:        Okay.

Christi:        What I'm working on is my master's thesis and going to school to get a master's in communication and PR but my undergraduate degree is in urban planning and that's the field that I've worked in for the past 10 years or so. What I'm focusing on for my thesis is looking at how a handful of cities across the US are communicating with their residents to help those residents solve issues, be more engaged in the community, that type of thing. That's kind of what my questions will focus on.

Employee:        Okay, okay.

Christi:        Can you tell me a little bit about your role in the government?

Employee:        Sure, so I am the customer service manager for the Citizens' Service Bureau. The Citizens' Service Bureau is one umbrella of the Neighborhood Stabilization Team. The Neighborhood Stabilization Team is actually broken into two parts; it's the Neighborhood Stabilization officers also known as the neighborhood improvement specialists that primarily work in the field in each of our 28 wards throughout the city. Then the internal piece is the Citizen Service Center, which is a contact center and often times, many citizens and stakeholders' first point of contact with municipal government.

We handle calls ranging from streetlights being out to potholes to high weeds and grass, building code violations … you name it, we pretty much handle it. We

do a lot of information and referral just to other departments. I manage that piece of it and we have one customer service supervisor and eight customer service representatives who are here Monday through Friday, eight to five to answer the calls.

On average, we take about 9,000 calls per month and enter approximately … and this is just the actual call center. The call center reps enter approximately 4,000 service requests and those are issues that citizens report that affect their quality of life. We enter them into a web-based program called City Works and they get disseminated to the various operating departments within city government for investigation and resolution.

We also communicate with our citizens via Twitter. They can tweet issues and pictures to us that we translate to service request, they can enter service requests themselves online through the city's web portal, they can email us …. I'm trying to think what else. Then also the neighborhood improvement specialists, the 28 people that work in the field, part of their job is to make observations and then come back and enter a service request on quality of life issues.

Christi:     Okay, so are you mainly then just responding or are you also trying to communicate a message to the citizens as well

Employee:     Well, primarily, the communication primarily is one way. The citizens report issues and concerns to us. However, we through our Facebook page sometimes promote different initiatives and different happenings throughout the city, changes in refuse routes maybe due to parades or other events.

We also utilize Nextdoor, which is like social media for neighborhood groups. We use that to promote different tips and ideas. To also utilize also utilize a lot of other city departments to promote the same sorts of things. It's still catching on throughout St. Louis. I wouldn't say that all neighborhoods and all citizens use it but it's slowly catching on. To answer your primary question, we don't really do a whole bunch of direct outreach to citizens from our customer service department, it's primarily inbound.

Christi:       Okay.

Employee:     Now this neighborhood improvement specialists, the people that work in the field, they are definitely the eyes and the ears and act as the liaisons between residents, businesses, other concerned stakeholders and municipal governments. They are way more active in the community with sharing information about development, issues and concerns, trends with crime, crime prevention and other quality of life issues. They work closely with groups to abate, permanently resolve public nuisances. They also do community projects such as gardening and playgrounds and things of that nature.

Christi:       Okay, have you seen residents use some of your social media sites and start connecting with each other

Employee:     Definitely, through Nextdoor and I'll just say this, the city can't really take the credit more so for Nextdoor because it's an outside company that many cities utilize but it's a forum for citizens to talk to each other. They can either talk in small groups within their neighborhood or they can post messages and exchange information with neighboring communities with the city at large. That's definitively

catching on. I guess the disconnect there is truly for the citizens who don't use the internet or who don't have the ability to.

A lot of citizens here still utilize old-fashioned neighborhood groups and the federation of lock units for keeping abreast and communicating not only with each other, the city and strongly with police departments too.

Christi:	Okay, how long have you guys been using Nextdoor?

Employee:	Oh boy, let's see here, it's been over a year. Let me see if I can find that information while you are on the phone.

Christi:	Even just an estimate would be fine. I just didn't know if it was multiple years or months.

Employee:	It's been less than two years but I don't know exactly when we started using it.

Christi:	Okay and did you see kind of a change right away once you started using that or was it so or …?

Employee:	Honestly, it's been growing. More progressive neighborhoods … I don't know if progressive is the right word but neighborhoods who have residents who are more tech savvy, adopted it earlier than neighborhoods that have people that aren't so tech savvy I guess for lack of a better word.

Christi:	Okay, can you think of any examples from any of your platforms that you use for outreach where you've seen residents come together and try and resolve a problem themselves?

Employee:	Sure, using Nextdoor or just in general?

Christi:       In general if any of that platform.

Employee:      Okay, well, for Nextdoor, I've seen communities utilize it for solving crime like I had one neighborhood for instance who had a rash of burglaries and they used Nextdoor to disseminate information about the number of burglaries, the location of the burglaries and to really just create awareness about what was happening in the neighborhood. It provided an opportunity for neighbors who hadn't previously known each other to get to know each other because they were experiencing the same issues.

       It helped them to feel like they weren't alone and for them to partner to really reverse the problem in their neighborhood and also allow that particular neighborhood to learn best practices from another neighborhood that experienced similar issues with crime. It's a great tool for posting links, pictures, all kind of things. It's very secure in the fact that it has a … Nextdoor's system has a way of verifying residency before allowing just anyone to join the groups. For instance, you'd have to submit a cell phone number or allow a purchase of maybe $1 on your credit card because it was their backend way of verifying your billing address.

Christi:       Interesting.

Employee:      That provides some security so yeah, I think it's just Nextdoor.com and it's utilized by a lot of cities throughout the US. I'm just trying to go through and see if only …

Christi:       Okay, interesting, a lot of communities that I've talked to have brought up the fact that there's kind of this population shift moving from the central city

area out to the suburbs. Is that something that you've noticed over the past few years and had to deal with communication challenges because of?

Employee:     Okay, hey, can you ask the questions again?

Christi:     Sure, a lot of cities have mentioned this population shift where residents are moving out of the central city and into more suburban areas. I'm curious if you've seen that issue come up in some of the questions that residents are asking you or the challenges that that's caused for the city or the residents in it.

Employee:     Okay, well, I haven't experienced it directly and citizens don't call us directly about the issue but the things that we see indirectly as a result of sprawl, is more vacant buildings, vacant and abandoned buildings but I don't have the statistics readily available for you as to how they've changed over the years. With increases in vacancy in neighborhoods, they are more susceptible to crime and adverse quality of life so …

Christi:     Right, right.

Employee:     It looks like we've been using Nextdoor maybe since about October of '13 so I guess not quite a year yet. I thought it's been longer but yeah.

Christi:     Okay, cool, what are some of the tactics that you or your staff kind of keep in your hip pockets or when a resident would contact you with an issue that's kind of negative that you want to respond to that?

Employee:     Well, the city St. Louis really has a push for being more transparent. I would say we really don't have a technique to deal with that type of question. It's not a different technique than what we would use for any other question.

We try to be empathetic and hear the customers concerns fully and to just

comprehensively hear about the issue and what resources we can offer and pull together

an effort to help improve the situation.

Christi: Interesting, have you had any residents give you feedback on

having Twitter or the Facebook as a method for contacting the city positive or negative?

Employee: Well, it's growing, it's growing. We haven't had any … the only

negative feedback that we get from time to time about Twitter is that sometimes it's … I

guess citizens … we could have provided a friendly more customer-focused response and

tweeting back. That's the only negative feedback. Sometimes we get calls or … sorry, we

get tweets and calls from people who live outside of our service area because we actually

only serve the city of St. Louis and the city of St. Louis is separate from St. Louis County

so the City of St. Louis is its own county. Sometimes we have to turn customers away

just because it's outside of our service area.

For instance, this winter, we dealt a lot with potholes and needing to fill

potholes. The media jumped all over it and invited people to tweet us if they needed

potholes filled. We got a flood of tweets and calls about that and some of the time it was

for St. Louis County or for another municipality.

Christi: Okay, [inaudible 00:16:03]. Kind of knowing the research area that

I'm looking at, as my last question, what's the one thing that I should know about St.

Louis or about how St. Louis communicates?

Employee: Well, one thing is that we are in all areas of city government

adopting a policy of open government and transparency and improving that. I'm trying to

think of …. What else, what else, what else? We are really striving to make it easier to do business with the city of St. Louis and just to be more accessible to residents and make it a desirable place to live, work and play.

Christi:    Okay, great, thanks. Well, that's actually all of my questions. Quick interview there but thank you so much for serving on this call and taking service, this has been really great.

Employee:    Certainly, certainly, I'm sorry that I couldn't connect with you before now but if there are any follow up questions or anything that you have, please feel free to reach out to me.

Christi:    Okay, definitely, I definitely will.

Employee:    Oh and another thing, I don't know if it would be useful to you but through the city's website, we have a portal where you can download for analysis, the data that we collect here in the Citizens' Service Bureau. I don't know if that would ever be of interest to you but its there for your use.

Christi:    Interesting, is that on the Service Bureau's web page or is it …?

Employee:    You know what, it's true. Let me look it up for you because it's not on our web page but it's through our planning and design department. Let me see if I can look it up. The newspapers extract that data a lot and create different reports and write stories sometimes based on what's available. Let me see if I can find it for you. Bear with me just a second. If I don't have it for you before we get off of this phone, I will find it for you and email you the links.

Christi:    Okay, yeah, that will be great.

Employee:     Yeah, we can do that because I don't want to have you on the phone while I'm fumbling around trying to find it here but I know it's available.

Christi:      Yeah and I can hunt for it as well now that I know it's in the planning and design section.

Employee:     Oh, okay, I just found it. Yeah, it's called public data sets so I'm going to email you the link right now.

Christi:      Perfect.

Employee:     Okay and I'm trying to think if there may be anything else that may be beneficial. I can't think of anything right off the top of my head but if you think of something, I guess feel free to shoot me an email or just give me a quick call and I'll definitely try to help you get the information that you need.

Christi:      Okay, that would be great, thank you so much.

Employee:     Okay, all right, thank you so much, have a great evening.

Christi:      You too.

Employee:     Okay, bye, bye.

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## Biography

Christi Collins graduated from Rosary High School, Aurora, Illinois, in 2000. She received her Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development from Ball State University in 2004. She was employed as an urban planner at local, county, regional and federal levels over the next ten years and received her Master of Arts in Communication from George Mason University in 2015.