The Political Correlates of Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Winter Park, FL

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The Political Correlates of Sustainable Development: A case study of Winter Park, FL

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ABSTRACT

How do cities find the path to sustainable development policy when confronted with constituent opposition?

To address this dilemma, a case study of a small, land-locked city in Central Florida was conducted, whose long battle with sustainable development has been, at times, both successful and unsuccessful. Winter Park provides an excellent backdrop for studying which political correlates are requisite for the successful execution of growth policy.

This study explores three sustainable development initiatives in Winter Park: (a) light rail, (b) SunRail, and (c) transit-oriented development. The researcher conducted an analysis of both archival research and structured interviews with local elected officials, key players, and fact experts. This study seeks to analyze the efficacy of electoral politics, explain why attitudes have changed over time, and determine how to make the political climate in Winter Park more conducive to sustainable growth and development.
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Introduction: Why do we care about sustainable development?

Urban sprawl is an increasingly ubiquitous epidemic that affects American cities of every size. Although there is no single accepted definition of this elusive notion, one common definition describes sprawl as “a form of urbanization distinguished by leapfrog patterns of development, commercial strips, low density, separated land uses, automobile dominance, and a minimum of public open space.” Characterized by “the expansion of cities into rural areas,” urban sprawl became a widespread phenomenon in the second half of the 20th century. Heading into the 21st century, nearly all Americans live in suburbs. This is primarily a result of innovative transportation technology that allows commuters to live further away from jobs, the allure and perceived practicality of the sprawled, decongested suburban lifestyle, the rise of the automobile age, and the distinctly American attribute of individualism and property ownership. Research on the potential adverse effects of this prevalent phenomenon has revealed that sprawl has negative consequences on many tenets of public health.

Specific health implications of sprawl cover a diverse array of concerns. The travel patterns of a person living in a sprawled community generate “substantial quantities of air pollutants,” enabling pollution, reducing water quality and quantity, and similar environmental concerns. Physical activity levels drastically decrease as walking is discouraged and individual automobile use is encouraged, indicating a correlation between sprawl and obesity. Moreover, “the automobile is a relatively hazardous mode of travel,” facilitating traffic-related accidents, injuries and deaths. Sprawl also contributes to mental illnesses, with the built environment and excessive amounts of driving causing psychological stress, depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns. The loss of social capital, as exhibited by a sense of community, civic engagement, and inclusivity is yet another negative consequence of urban sprawl.

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3 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 22.
6 Ibid., 23.
7 Ibid., 22-25.
Given the assortment of public health, infrastructure, and environmental concerns associated with a sprawling metropolis, it follows that local municipalities should strive to avoid perpetuating sprawl. Rebuilding thousands of cities across the United States might seem like an unfeasibly difficult and impractical manner of combating the ails of urban sprawl, so in the late 1990s and early 2000s, a number of organizations addressed this dilemma and sought to diminish sprawl itself. In 1996, the Smart Growth Network was established by a partnership between the Environmental Protection Agency and a number of public interest groups. This movement sought to be an “aesthetically pleasing alternative to urban sprawl that would offer residents a high quality of life and the convenience of local amenities” by way of detailed planning and development guidelines. Smart Growth advocates for the implementation of the development techniques and values in Figure A at the local, regional, state, and even federal level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure A: Development Techniques and Missions of Smart Growth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mixed land uses</td>
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<td>• Compact building design</td>
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<td>• A range of housing opportunities and choices (mixed-income land use)</td>
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<td>• Walkable neighborhoods</td>
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<td>• Distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place</td>
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<td>• Preservation of open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas</td>
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<td>• Development that focuses on existing communities</td>
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<td>• A range of transportation choices</td>
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<td>• Predictable, fair, and cost effective development decisions</td>
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Since its inception, Smart Growth principles have fueled the formation of and been adopted by many organizations seeking to combat sprawl (e.g. Sierra Club, Urban Land Institute, American Farmland Trust), but the central goals have remained consistent throughout. Smart Growth is, nonetheless, not without controversy and opposition. Of the locally-voiced and academically documented opposition, five ubiquitous critiques emerge—these concerns are outlined in Figure B.

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11 Resnik, 1853.
12 Frumkin, et al., *Urban Sprawl*, 204.
Despite moderate political and academic opposition, the Smart Growth movement’s successes in reducing sprawl and its consequences have been researched and documented at length. Local and national organizations have launched across the United States, in an effort to

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14 Resnik, 1854.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
19 Resnik, 1853.
20 Ibid., 1854.
21 Frumkin et al., Urban Sprawl, 197.
22 Ibid., 206.
23 Resnik, 1854.
24 Frumkin et al., Urban Sprawl.
educate the public on the true goals of Smart Growth and dispel its common critiques.\textsuperscript{25} Books have been written about the dozens of cities across the country which have spearheaded Smart Growth projects with documented success in “urban and suburban redevelopment, compact and transit-oriented new development and the protection of precious natural landscapes and watersheds.”\textsuperscript{26}

A related but not entirely synonymous movement was born with the Congress for the New Urbanism in 1993. Arising out of a similar desire to mitigate the negative effects of sprawl, New Urbanism is a “movement to reduce sprawl and improve societal well-being through changes in the built environment that produce compact, socially diverse, and pedestrian-oriented settlements.”\textsuperscript{27} While Smart Growth encompasses a range of techniques that collectively minimize sprawl, New Urbanism primarily focuses on creating enduring and distinct centers of community, spatially and culturally appropriate architecture, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{28} The Charter of the New Urbanism asserts that the movement stands for “the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.”\textsuperscript{29}

Taken collectively, these measures are referred to as sustainable development.\textsuperscript{30} If growth is inevitable, then cities and municipalities must find ways to grow such that they can continue to thrive and prosper; they must grow sustainably. Smart Growth, New Urbanism, and similar movements endeavor ‘to meet the challenges of sustainability’\textsuperscript{31} Sustainable development is not just a novel theoretical idea – it has been empirically shown that “smarter development is more environmentally sound and fiscally prudent” than low-density communities.\textsuperscript{32} The “evidence that sprawl is being solved one community at a time all across the nation” using Smart Growth principles is abundant, with dozens of geographically and culturally diverse cities in the United

\textsuperscript{25} Smirniotopoulos, 16.
\textsuperscript{27} Dan Trudeau, "New Urbanism as Sustainable Development?" \textit{Geography Compass} 7, no. 6 (2013): 435.
\textsuperscript{28} Patric De Villiers, "New Urbanism," \textit{Australian Planner} 34, no. 1 (1997): 30.
\textsuperscript{29} “Charter of the New Urbanism,” Congress for the New Urbanism. \texttt{http://www.cnu.org/charter}.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 418.
States successfully using these techniques.\textsuperscript{33} These cities have spearheaded sustainable projects with documented success in “urban and suburban redevelopment, compact and transit-oriented new development and the protection of precious natural landscapes and watersheds.”\textsuperscript{34}

Given its demonstrated efficacy in combating “climate change, energy dependence, public health, decaying infrastructure, and financial instability,” it is perhaps surprising that more cities have not actively pursued sustainable development policy.\textsuperscript{35} However, there exist a number of impediments to achieving sustainable development in local government. Aside from properly educating citizens on the benefits of sustainable development as a counter to urban sprawl (which would likely only happen on a large scale with the implementation of an early-childhood education model), city officials and politicians are increasingly faced with local opposition to sustainable development policy. Residents’ concerns that a pro-growth policy would “snarl traffic, decimate natural areas and destroy neighborhood character” frequently stall measures towards alternative transportation modes, increased density, or transit-oriented development.\textsuperscript{36}

Noted professor of urban planning Scott Campbell has insightfully outlined a different, but equally important set of conflicts with sustainable development policy. His “Planner’s Triangle” recognizes that true sustainable development is the ability to coexist in harmony between three diverging sets of interests: social justice and income equality, environmental protection, and economic growth and efficiency.\textsuperscript{37} Since these interests are not homogenous and frequently in direct conflict, the urban planner or political leader must work to “grow the economy, distribute this growth fairly, and in the process not degrade the ecosystem.”\textsuperscript{38} Achieving the elusive center of the triangle will yield true sustainable development, but how does one reconcile the axial conflicts between economic growth and equitable distribution, between natural resource preservation and profit-increasing tendencies, between social equity and environmental protection?

Consequently, it is prudent to question how politicians are ever able to implement sustainable development policy when faced with staunch local opposition and such conflicting objectives. The current literature on the politics of sustainable development does not include in-

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\textsuperscript{33} Schear, 142.  \\
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 141.  \\
\textsuperscript{35} Andres Duany and Jeff Speck, \textit{The Smart Growth Manual} (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), xiii.  \\
\textsuperscript{36} Warner, 171.  \\
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 297.
\end{flushleft}
depth studies of individual cities and their struggle with growth politics: “Current explanations of the adoption of smart growth practices can benefit from the study of local political institutions that interact with political and economic forces.” In order to explain how cities are able to overcome opposition to growth management policies, this researcher conducted a case study of a small city in Florida. Winter Park’s long battle with sustainable development has been both successful and unsuccessful, providing an excellent backdrop for studying which political correlates are requisite for the implementation of growth policy. One of the staple planning principles of the city’s Comprehensive Plan seeks to “discourage the proliferation of urban sprawl.” Even though Winter Park is a land-locked community, it is still a beneficiary of the negative consequences of the sprawled Central Florida metropolis; consequently, it has the potential to mitigate the side effects of sprawl by implementing sustainable development initiatives. However, over the last several decades, elected officials of Winter Park have faced considerable opposition from their constituents to the notion of sustainable development.

“Existing studies of local economic development and growth management conclude that pro-growth interests dominate the local agenda for land-use regulations and are capable of building coalitions to overcome opposition,” says one study, but Winter Park’s story contradicts this phenomenon. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the public transportation saga: Congressman John Mica (R-FL) worked for nearly two decades to bring high-speed public transportation to Central Florida. Local resistance from Winter Park residents proved to be most effective at diverting attempts to bring rail through the community. In the late 1990s, Rep. Mica’s tireless efforts to bring light-rail to Central Florida were eventually thwarted by Winter Park residents’ concern about preserving the small-town village character. The subsequent campaign for commuter rail was a nine-year battle, with Winter Park residents once again at the center of the opposition. However, residents and leadership eventually acquiesced to a commuter rail plan, whose Winter Park station would end up being built in the heart of the community. SunRail finally opened its doors on May 1st, 2014, nearly twenty years after Congressman

41 Ramirez De La Cruz, 223.
Mica’s first attempt “to get the region’s political leaders off their parochial pedestals and behind a single project.”

Although a victory for proponents of sustainable development, certain Winter Park residents were determined that SunRail would be the first and last facet of sustainable development that Winter Park would see. Before SunRail had even opened its doors, Winter Park residents were already voicing concern about high-density structures taking over the historic downtown. The war over density only intensified in the months following SunRail’s successful unveiling, as developers naturally gravitated towards the area’s potential for profitable transit-oriented development (TOD). In late 2014, the acrimonious nature of the density debate reached such intensity that the city of Winter Park decided to explore alternative approaches to consensus building. In an effort to emulate true participatory democracy, the city is currently in the planning stages of an extensive visioning exercise. This exercise would look for common ground among participants as the city explores how they would like to develop in the future.

The initial push for light-rail in the late 1990s, the subsequent struggle to build SunRail, and the war over transit-oriented development are explored at length in this study. This research sheds light on the effective and ineffective political correlates of sustainable development, and the struggle to reconcile opposition to growth policies.

Methodology

42 Fuchsia Dunlop, "Urgent Transit - All aboard a Sensible Plan Emerges to Use $97.5 Million in Federal Funds," Orlando Sentinel, February 11, 1995.
45 Anne Mooney, "Comp Plan Amendment Fails; City Takes Up FY 2015 Budget," Winter Park Voice, September 6, 2014.
In order to gather the complete progression of these three Winter Park cases, this researcher conducted a qualitative analysis of both archival research and interview-based research. Performing archival research presented the factual progression of each case, while a series of structured interviews served to determine the efficacy of electoral politics, explain how attitudes towards sustainable policy in Winter Park have changed over time, and provide insight on how to make the political environment more conducive to sustainable development.

Three distinct categories of key players and participants in the Winter Park story were interviewed: former and current elected officials (commissioners and mayors), recurring key players (leaders of local opposition groups, city board members, etc.), and fact experts (non-elected officials who provided an unbiased, independent appraisal of the timeline and the political process). This researcher performed the interviews herself, positing a series of structured and open-ended questions, which differed depending on the interviewee’s designated category. Elected officials were asked to describe their former and present position on sustainable development, and how each step of the political process (campaigning, serving in office, and retiring from office) affected their view. Recurring key players were asked similar applicable questions, along with how their position has changed and their overall appraisal of how the political process has impacted sustainable development initiatives in the area. Fact experts served to corroborate the archival research, provide an unbiased appraisal of the political process, and point to key players that may not have been identified yet. All participants were asked to discuss how they believe the city should reconcile opposition and build consensus.

A qualitative analysis of the interviews, together with the archival research, revealed the successful and unsuccessful political correlates of sustainable development throughout Winter Park’s tumultuous political history. It is this researcher’s hope that the study will serve to demonstrate how cities like Winter Park can enact sustainable development policy when faced with opposition. In seeking to establish whether opposition is reconcilable, this study explores how to change public opinion, and what can be done to make the political environment more conducive to sustainable development.
Case #1: The Light Rail Story (1988-2000)

The history of Winter Park’s public transit is intertwined directly with the rail saga of greater Orlando. Both major rail proposals discussed in this study are a product of regional initiatives, and any analysis of their political underpinnings would be remiss to exclude the greater context. Thus, the Winter Park rail story must be told within the context of the greater struggle for regional transit in order to understand the political implications for sustainable development in Winter Park.

Orlando’s quest for public transportation began, as many things in Central Florida do, with Walt Disney World. With throngs of people traveling from the Orlando International Airport to the Magic Kingdom every day, Orange County Commissioner Lou Treadway recognized the situation as ripe for a transportation proposal. In May 1988, local Interstate-4 (I-4) traffic was already notoriously unpleasant and full of “traffic jams from hell,” prompting Treadway to consider an alternative way for navigating the sprawled Orlando metropolis. To this end, he proposed a $394 million light rail system that would connect Disney World with its primary source of visitors, the Orlando International Airport. His rail vision also included stops in downtown Orlando to “zip commuters past traffic jams,” and would have proceeded all the way to Seminole County. Unfortunately, the key lynchpin of the system was unwilling to participate, and without Disney’s support Treadway’s project was but a pipe dream.

The 1988 murmurings of an alternative transportation system may have been faint, but they marked the humble beginnings of what became a decades-long battle to provide Central Florida residents (and visitors) with an alternative to the daily I-4 traffic debacle.

It did not take long for the planted seed of light rail to begin germinating once more within the minds of Central Florida’s leadership. Talk of light rail first resurfaced during the 1990 annual state of counties forum for Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties. The buzz of the forum was growth and development, and how to manage its consequences. As individual

48 Stewart, “Looking for Lou.”
municipalities expanded, regional thinking was becoming necessary, and the county leaders recognized this; vice chairman of the Orange County Commission Bill Donegan even spoke of “consolidating the region's mass transit efforts into one ‘super agency.’” Moreover, Donegan encouraged this regional transportation authority to “coordinate construction of a light-rail system between Seminole and Orange counties.”

These conciliatory feelings, however, did not last for long. Following the April forum, a $200,000 study was commissioned by the Metropolitan Planning Organization, which claimed that it was “not time yet for a commuter train from downtown Orlando to its northern suburbs.”

Despite the distinctly vague nature of this proclamation, the study’s outcome sparked an outpouring of sentiment on the subject. While some used the study’s results as support for an anti-rail resolve, others (such as the Orlando Sentinel) recognized the sprawl which would inevitably prosper without regional transit, and its ill-effects. For the local newspaper, alternative transportation was “a matter of when, not if.”

This study brought light rail front and center into the public and political discourse. By July of 1990, Orlando and Altamonte Springs officials were “serious about getting people out of cars and into trains,” though Winter Park officials refused to even consider it. Simultaneously, the election for State House Representative of District 36 (which encompasses Winter Park) was launched, and centered prominently around the issue of light rail. Former airline pilot Bob Starks entered the race, endorsed by not-yet-Governor Jeb Bush and claiming that he would “support a regional planning agency to coordinate transportation issues in Central Florida,” as well as “back a light rail system if it proved economically feasible.” Starks was opposed by former Orange County Commissioner Lou Treadway, infamous champion of light rail. Nonetheless, Bob Starks won the Republican nomination by a landslide, and rode into office unopposed in the general election.

Evidently, despite Winter Park residents’ silence on light rail, they elected a representative who tangentially supported light rail under the right circumstances, and fully

50 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
supported a regional planning agency. Here can be seen the beginnings of what will come to characterize the entire sustainable development story in Winter Park: internal strife, electoral contradictions, an ongoing struggle to reconcile opposition, and resistance to regional initiatives.

By 1992, the Central Florida Commuter Rail Authority had been formed and was unveiling plans for a light rail system which would run along the existing north-south CSX tracks. This particular route had trains running through Orlando, Winter Park, and Altamonte Springs “every five to 10 minutes at peak traffic, with up to 27,000 daily riders.” It might be interesting to note that even present-day SunRail does not have such ambitious expectations, with trains running every half-hour, and an expected 4,300 daily ridership. The 1992 plan, however, struggled to gain traction as the Authority grappled with the difficulty of acquiring funding outside of federal grants: "We're not going to get any state or local funding unless we get local support."

In November of 1992, a successful Orlando businessman and former Florida House Representative was elected to the United States House of Representatives for District 7 (encompassing Winter Park). It took John Mica only two years in national office to realize his potential as Central Florida’s biggest champion of alternative transportation. By 1995, this established conservative was advocating for a government-funded solution to Orlando’s urban sprawl problem. Mica began convening “the area’s top elected officials, transportation experts, and other interested parties to discuss high-speed rail ideas and forge consensus.” The federal government had set aside $97.5 million for the purpose of building a magnetically levitated, high-speed rail in the tourism corridor, which “fell victim last year [1994] to financing problems and fighting among its developers.” Now, Central Florida officials needed to find an alternative use for the allotted funds, or they would disappear. The convened participants came up with at least three different proposals for the funds, from a light-rail system on International Drive to an

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57 Dan Tracy, “SunRail Ridership up in October, Ending 3-Month Skid for Train,” *Orlando Sentinel*, November 5, 2014
58 Roy, “Light Rail Plans.”
ambiguous high-speed rail project. Consequently, the only agreement reached was that the group should meet again."\textsuperscript{62}

The regional and national spotlight on alternative transportation seemingly galvanized Winter Park residents into action. It was around this time that Winter Park residents began writing letters to the \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, espousing their views on alternative transportation. Winter Park resident Ray Reynolds even proclaimed, “Let's change our culture and discover there is freedom beyond the car.”\textsuperscript{63} Armed with some support from these constituents, Congressman Mica was “tireless in his efforts to get the region's political leaders off their parochial pedestals and behind a single project.”\textsuperscript{64} In 1996, Mica tried to bring the vision of light rail into a realistic perspective by setting up a test run in Orlando. His objective was to raise awareness and demonstrate the sensibility of an alternative transportation system.\textsuperscript{65} The test run was at least somewhat successful, as just a few months later, in October, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) held workshops in conjunction with local bus system Lynx about the proposed light-rail project.\textsuperscript{66} The workshops were intended to provide an open forum for local residents, providing answers to their questions and gathering suggestions for proposal improvement.

By 1997, light rail was finally becoming a serious topic of discussion in Central Florida, with potentially tangible outcomes. Consensus overwhelmingly dictated that the route should be placed along the median of the I-4 highway. Consultants were hired to study “how the line would affect the environment and neighborhoods along its route,” planners held public meetings, and elected officials considered sales tax referendums.\textsuperscript{67} Perhaps as a result of looming fiscal plans and raised taxes, Winter Park residents began reversing their former support of light rail. It began with mixed sentiments. Winter Park resident Bonnie Mitchell expressed that she "will vote against every politician that favors this black hole of taxpayer money," while others still hailed it as a much-needed “decongestant needed for the perpetually clogged Interstate 4 corridor.”\textsuperscript{68} Soon, however, anti-rail attitudes overshadowed those in support, at least in press coverage. A “government boondoggle,” a “colossal waste of taxpayer dollars,” and “absolute foolishness”

\textsuperscript{62} Dunlop, “Don’t Fritter Away.”
\textsuperscript{66} “Workshops Set on Light-Rail Transit,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, October 5, 1996.
were sentiments expressed with varying vehemence throughout 1997.\textsuperscript{69} While some residents were merely concerned about declining property values and noise, others were keen on pointing out the seemingly undesirable socioeconomic dichotomy alternative transportation caters to.

The grumblings from Winter Park residents did not yet have a pronounced effect on the project as a whole, for in July of 1997, the United States Senate appropriated $31.8 million exclusively for light rail in Central Florida.\textsuperscript{70} This huge monetary and symbolic commitment from the federal government signaled an enthusiastic endorsement for the project and marked its official start. Consequently, it took only a month for Winter Park residents’ reservations to morph into full-on protests. Mild complaints about the apparent fiscal waste or superfluous nature of the project turned into assertions from Commissioner Rachel Murrah that light rail “will destroy this wonderful little town we've been working so hard to protect.”\textsuperscript{71} Moreover, the proposed rail placement shifted from the aforementioned I-4 median to the existing CSX tracks, which run directly through downtown Winter Park. This exacerbated adverse sentiments amidst residents: concerns about preserving Winter Park’s small-town character were supplemented by apprehensions that the new placement would “destroy my neighborhood and divide the city.”\textsuperscript{72}

In addition to the quality-of-life concerns, Winter Park officials themselves were irked because they felt they were not properly consulted during the course of the project’s gestation period.\textsuperscript{73} Consequently, in a near-unanimous vote, the City Commission chose to rescind a previously adopted resolution of support for light-rail in September 1997. Carrying both symbolic and practical implications, the vote sent a clear message to the rest of Central Florida that “Commissioners still are perturbed about their lack of information and inclusion in the process.”\textsuperscript{74} The Commissioners did not stop there, however, and in an effort to solidify their presence in the overall planning process, they also created a task force of citizens who would closely monitor FDOT’s consultants and their actions. Winter Park Mayor Joseph Terranova vocally demanded that alternative routes be studied, such as nearby Denning Drive or the original I-4 route. City Commissioners also held work sessions on how to defy the project, and sentiments towards light rail became decidedly more hostile amongst city officials and residents.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Tamara Lytle, “Panel Jump-Starts Orlando Light Rail,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, July 16, 1997.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
It is perhaps significant to note that the only dissenting vote in the decision to withdraw support was Mayor Terranova’s. Although he was equally vocal in his frustrations about regional exclusion, he asserted that “it was premature to rescind the resolution” and that “the city must support mass transit options because traffic only will continue to get worse.”75

By November, the citizen task force had become an advisory board, and they were formulating definitive recommendations. A route along I-4 was their primary endorsement (a route that had already been disqualified by rail planners due to feasibility), but they conceded that a route along Denning Drive “would be less harmful” than a route through the heart of downtown Winter Park.76 Local coalitions and businesses, like the Winter Park Historical Association and the U.S. Postal Service wrote to City Commissioners expressing their discontent at a route along CSX tracks.

Light rail had become a contentious and controversial subject in Winter Park. At the top of the priority list seemed to be the preservation of Winter Park’s unique village character and avoiding the allegedly inevitable noise pollution. City officials expressed fiscal concerns, and both Mayor Terranova and Commissioner Marchman referenced discomfort at the requisite infrastructure changes.

Consequently, political opposition to light rail rapidly increased in January 1998. Despite their vocal concerns, Winter Park officials’ apprehension had not been assuaged, so the city turned to the electoral avenue to express their discontent. In a 4-1 vote, the City Commission had decided “to oppose ‘unequivocally’ plans to run a light-rail system through Central Park [prompting] cheers and applause from about 125 residents in attendance.”77 Once again, the dissenting vote was from Mayor Terranova.

Nearly two decades later, former Mayor Terranova recalls the controversy and explains his ongoing support for alternative transportation in the face of such fervent resistance from Commissioners and residents alike. In an interview, Terranova rationalized his support of light rail as a product of his extensive career abroad, residing in European cities with mature mass transit. When asked why the rest of the Commission so vehemently opposed the project, the former mayor speculated that automobile dependence was a strong causal factor:

75 Ibid.
Because they didn't understand it. People in the united states basically are married to their automobile and they will not give it up. It's a very difficult thing they want their automobiles, it's very convenient, and they expect the roads to be built, but the roads are so expensive today that it's not a sustainable way of growth. 

Commissioner (and later Mayor) Kip Marchman contextualized his opposition with slightly different concerns, which would later be echoed by Winter Park residents during the commuter rail story:

There was pretty much a consensus on the Commission that we were worried about what light rail would actually do to downtown. People were afraid of the change, they did not want to destroy Winter Park's qualities. And they thought it would destroy what we had become.

The vote to oppose a light rail station in Winter Park was held at a crucial moment, just weeks before the Lynx transportation authority was scheduled to cast a final vote on light rail plans. City residents went one step further, supplementing the electoral resistance by collecting more than 1,700 signatures from Winter Park citizens who opposed the light rail project. City officials presented the petition, along with an explanation of their vote of opposition to the relevant planning authorities in January.

Evidently, the goal was to put enough political pressure on the central planning authorities that they would consider alternate routes, rather than the complete abolition of light rail. The support of neighboring municipalities Maitland and Altamonte Springs was likely instrumental in Winter Park’s continued interest. Nonetheless, Winter Park wasn’t going to leave the fate of Central Park and downtown to their methods of political pressure.

Resident and coordinator of the petition against light rail, Kenneth Murrah, “suggested going door-to-door to urge voters to block any taxes that might pay for the project.” His wife, Commissioner Murrah, pointed out that the city owns the right of way for New York Avenue, which crosses the CSX tracks. Merely two weeks before the scheduled final vote on the project by regional transportation authority Lynx, Winter Park hired a former administrative law judge in preparation of a legal alternative to the electoral resistance. The general mood was of apprehension and combat; as Commissioner Murrah put it, “we must act or be acted upon.”

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78 Joe Terranova, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2015. 
80 Bloodsworth, “Winter Park Joins.” 
81 Ibid. 
This time, the vote was unanimous, with Mayor Terranova’s support. Despite this, the Mayor still urged the city to not completely discount a route that would run through downtown, because “it would provide alternative transportation to people who lived, shopped or worked there.” It is telling of how acrimonious the light rail issue had become that, despite the Mayor’s vote of support, just this verbal caveat was enough to make the residents in attendance very angry: “After the Commission meeting, they threatened to start a petition to unseat the mayor if he continues to make public statements supporting light rail.”

In June of 1998, the City of Winter Park voted to pursue a legal challenge to light-rail by suing MetroPlan Orlando. The northern segment of the route, encompassing Winter Park and its equally disgruntled neighbors, Maitland and Altamonte Springs, had already been “on hold for months while planners and city leaders tried to work out their differences.” Nevertheless, Winter Park chose to sue the regional transportation authority. The legal challenge had an expected 18-month resolution process, with added time for an indefinite appeals process. In a particularly clairvoyant statement, MetroPlan board chairman Randy Morris responded to the litigation by telling the Orlando Sentinel that “it also could mean the cities would have a greater say in any future plans for the light rail or other mass transit system.”

Elsewhere, Universal Studios simultaneously refused to contribute the previously agreed upon figure of $28 million for the project, creating fiscal challenges for the rail line, and bringing negative publicity to an all-time high. Any remaining optimism about light-rail was unraveling, both in Winter Park and as a whole.

Winter Park and Maitland were somewhat rebuked in September of 1998, when an administrative judge dismissed their joint legal challenge. Notwithstanding, light rail plans were significantly damaged on all fronts: financial, legal, political, and public support was swiftly dwindling. Winter Park and Maitland embarked on the lengthy appeals process, stirring up incredible animosity within those communities towards light rail. In the following year, the extensive and drawn-out legal and political battle sealed the fate of the entire rail system. In June of 2000, the final screw was tightened on the light rail coffin: the $345 million of federal funding that was earmarked for Central Florida was withdrawn and re-appropriated for other cities, as the

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
Orange County Commissioners rejected the fiscal assistance. The *Orlando Sentinel* wrote a particularly stinging editorial, pointing out that “while Central Florida wallows in traffic, other communities with the vision to embrace mass-transit solutions are laughing all the way to the bank.”

Light rail in Winter Park fell victim to overly ambitious expectations, a lack of inclusive regional planning, perceived preservation issues, and a fear of burdensome infrastructure changes. Mayor Ken Bradley also suggested that “light rail wasn't connecting...major population areas...it really wasn't going places where people wanted to be.” In an interview, Mayor Terranova addressed preservationist concerns with a slightly different outlook than the mainstream Winter Park rhetoric of the time: “I've always felt that it's important to keep the village character of Winter Park, otherwise we would just become the suburb of Orlando and we would have no character whatsoever. But you can't stand still.” Terranova worked assiduously to allocate a higher percentage of MetroPlan funds for public transportation and bicycles, and he persisted through countless 4-1 votes on the City Commission. He did not, however, succeed in convincing Winter Park to consider a shift in the status quo.

Although this combination of factors spelled final doom for the light rail project, Congressman John Mica and MetroPlan Orlando did not remain defeated in their rail efforts for long.

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89 Ibid.
90 Ken Bradley, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
91 Joe Terranova, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2015.
Case #2: The SunRail Story (2001-2014)

Winter Park’s first foray into sustainable development was a tumultuous failure and a legal disaster. Even though a few elected officials in Winter Park may have felt that public transit was necessary and beneficial for the community, they were unable to foster positive sentiment amongst the community. Still, proponents of alternative transportation measures in Central Florida were not stumped for long. In 2002, the Orlando Sentinel reported on a new and potentially viable alternative that might be more palatable for the region:

To avoid the political sniping that killed the first project, planners are recommending a route that generally runs along Interstate 4 as it heads north to Altamonte Springs. Three years ago, Winter Park and Maitland strongly opposed a route cutting through those communities along existing freight tracks.92

Serious commuter rail plans did not emerge for several years, however. In a testament to lingering public distaste for transportation projects, Orange County voters overwhelmingly rejected a transportation tax in 2003, slated to be used for many improvements, including a yet-undetermined rail system.93 “Billed as the region’s last, best hope to come to grips with its congested roads,” the setback prompted Orange County chairman Rich Crotty to accept defeat and announce that “we're going to move on.”94

Nevertheless, the less intrusive commuter rail option gathered some steam in Central Florida. In June 2005, a prospective timetable emerged; the rail system was projected to begin service as early as 2009. State officials “released what they say are firm cost estimates to build the system -- totaling $473.5 million,” and even pledged to cover all costs exceeding the $118 million that would be split amongst the local counties.95 The fiscal responsibility of divvying up the local share fell to MetroPlan Orlando – the same authority Winter Park had just recently sued over light rail.

As frequently occurs when a large financial responsibility befalls local governments, murmurings about a tax increase also accompanied the gradually solidifying plans for a

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94 Ibid.
commuter rail project. Orange County mayor Rich Crotty bemoaned the fiscal uncertainties and worried that he would have to “negotiate deals to ask its cities, particularly Winter Park and Orlando, to share the costs.”

The hesitant attitude of Orange County leaders was mirrored by Winter Park officials, but without the anxiety. Former City Commissioner Kip Marchman, recently elected mayor, demonstrated cautious optimism regarding the project; he was “open to contributing,” he told the Orlando Sentinel, “though only if conditions are right.” His reservations stemmed primarily from concerns about freight trains and tracks.

Initially, the yet-unnamed commuter rail story proceeded much like light-rail did, nearly a decade prior. A fledgling transportation idea, fraught with uncertainties and open-ended fiscal obligations is presented to the Central Florida area; local area leaders are apprehensive but somewhat optimistic, and—most importantly—willing to consider the options. The light-rail fiasco has not yet been erased from memory, but the political environment in Winter Park is still conducive to commuter rail.

Just a few months after his cautious statement of interest, Kip Marchman’s re-election campaign was shaping up to be a contentious battle centered around development and commuter rail. Although not yet explicitly intertwined, this distinguished the beginnings of Winter Park’s perpetual and concurrent battle over large-scale development and transportation.

The election was antecedent by a legal and political battle over The Carlisle – a four-story condominium, retail and post office project adjacent to Central Park. Ideologically, Marchman felt, much as he does today, that development is both inevitable and necessary, and should merely be controlled in a “smart” way that wouldn’t destroy the distinct character of Winter Park. Conversely, his eventual mayoral opponent David Strong was quoted as describing the high-density project as “inappropriate” and “the dark side of allowing too much flexibility in the planning process.” This fundamental demarcation reflected the rhetoric which would eventually be adopted by both sides of the transit-oriented development (TOD) debate.

The Carlisle controversy had amassed such constituent discontent in February 2006 that David Strong himself turned to litigation, suing both the city of Winter Park and the developer of

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98 Christopher Sherman, “Condo Rises to Fore at Winter Park Forum,” Orlando Sentinel, February 8, 2006
100 Sherman, “Condo Rises to Fore.”
The Carlisle, sparking a legal battle and a countersuit against Strong. The disquiet over density and scale would not abate in the coming years, rather continuing to gain prominence and controversy, right up to present-day Winter Park politics.

The burgeoning campaign of early 2006 also brought commuter rail to the forefront. In addition to development and almost in the same breath, Marchman and Strong vigorously debated the latest regional transportation initiative. Catching the incumbent mayor slightly off guard, Strong expressed fervent opposition to any rail stop in the city, while Marchman “voiced support for a destination, rather than commuter, station.”

As the campaign neared Election Day in March, both candidates were increasingly pressured to declare their stance on commuter rail. Perhaps sensing the public’s uncertainty and not wanting to appear inflexible, Strong shifted his public comments from outright opposition to cautious ambivalence: “He can see how a station could help merchants downtown but doesn't think a station in Winter Park is necessary,” wrote the Orlando Sentinel just weeks before the election. Mayor Marchman, on the other hand, asserted that if commuter rail was going to go through Winter Park anyway, it would be imprudent and illogical to not allow the train to stop.

Mayor Marchman’s ability to “see the value such a stop could bring to nearby merchants and to residents looking to visit Orlando for a ball game, concert or business needs” earned him the endorsement of the Orlando Sentinel. It also earned him the disapproval of Winter Park voters. On March 14th of 2006, they cast Marchman out of office, by a margin of 562 votes. Mayor Strong garnered an astronomical 54.6 percent of the vote.

Reflecting on the pronounced defeat in an interview, Marchman pointed to the effectiveness of the electoral process in Winter Park. He believes it was indicative of a reluctance to considering a project that would damage the village character of the town and promote unsightly development amidst the quaint downtown area. Although the public’s views on growth and development did not align with Marchman’s relatively progressive leanings, he asserts that “very often people don’t spend enough time really reflecting upon the consequences of what’s

101 Ibid.
103 Kip Marchman, in discussion with the author, February 5, 2015.
106 Ibid.
being done.” Consequently, Marchman sensed that it is “an obligation of elected officials to use his or her judgment and their background” to inform their decisions. He used this personal philosophy during his re-election campaign, never straying from his conviction that “if you have a city that’s not growing, it’s dying.” This sentiment was, however, incompatible with the public attitude of the time, and his opposition resolutely ensured that they were represented accordingly. The civically engaged residents of Winter Park had learned in 2006 that electoral politics is effective in abating their discontent—a realization that would have enormous consequences down the road.

Despite the emblematic display of anti-development and anti-rail sentiments, the City Commission did not entirely dismiss the possibility of a rail stop. Merely three months after Marchman’s defeat, the Commission moved to create a commuter-rail task force, with the goal of gathering more information and analysis on the project. Several residents were prompted to express their opinions on the continuing quest for commuter rail by writing to the Orlando Sentinel. The conflicting nature of the letters are illustrative of the fractious nature of Winter Park at the time. Resident Sandy Womble wrote to the Sentinel expressing her incongruous belief that commuter rail will lead to urban sprawl and intense development along the line. Resident Kathy Rhodes wrote an impassioned response to Womble’s speculations, exemplifying rush hour traffic, which would surely be abated with a public transportation system. Rhodes also assures readers that concerns over “what such a commuter system would do to the quality of life in Winter Park…would be up to the good folks in Winter Park.”

The commuter rail battle continued heating up in Winter Park, prompting regional authorities to weigh in on the increasing rancor. The Orlando Sentinel emphasized that “commuter rail should check sprawl while breathing life into blighted or underused urban areas” and that “it's up to local government officials to plan park-and-ride options and incentives

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
packages that can stoke development around their stations.” Winter Park residents and officials, however, were keen on avoiding the very development the Sentinel had deemed essential.\footnote{\textit{“What a Deal,” McClatchy - Tribune Business News}, August 3, 2006.} The small but dedicated group of residents who thwarted The Carlisle and elected Mayor Strong had recognized a new culprit of high-density development: commuter rail.

Albeit the concession that freight trains would be removed from the tracks during the day (minimizing the oft-cited concern of noise and traffic disruption), residents were becoming, if anything, more opposed to alternative transportation, which might encourage high-density developments. The main spokesperson for the anti-rail cause was Carolyn Cooper, local resident concerned about questionable operating costs and, of course, “higher downtown densities.”\footnote{Christopher Sherman, “Activists in Winter Park Fret about Rail; Fans of the City’s Village Character Fear a Stop for Commuters Will Fuel Unwanted Development,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, August 9, 2006.} Cooper, along with her network of similarly minded and engaged residents, cited crime statistics and claims that “fares never cover operating expenses” as driving forces for rail opposition.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

The high-profile nature of Central Florida’s perpetual transportation conflicts was illustrated once more when Governor Jeb Bush, in August 2006, approved the infusion of nearly $500 million of state allocated money into commuter rail.\footnote{Jay Hamburg and Etan Horowitz, “Deal Finally Made on Commuter Rail,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, August 2, 2006.} A deal with CSX Transportation was nearly finalized, and FDOT had formally accepted the responsibility of overseeing design, construction, and operation of the project. Commuter rail was proceeding effectively, prompting some to recall the light-rail fiasco of the 1990s and call this a "good first step" towards realizing regional public transportation.\footnote{Ibid.} The Orlando Sentinel took this opportunity to postulate that “with funding mostly lined up and details over routes and stops just about worked out, only minor negotiations remain before construction can begin, and trains could start running between DeBary and Orlando by late 2009.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

The Sentinel’s ambitious prediction could not have been more wrong, having greatly underestimated the intensity of the remaining “minor negotiations.” To this end, Orlando resident Jeff Truesdell chastised Winter Park officials’ reluctance to embrace commuter rail as the rest of Central Florida had: “What is wrong with the handful of folks who still oppose commuter rail's arrival in Winter Park?... We, too, love what they have to offer, and have no desire to overtake or
ruin it.”¹¹⁹ Truesdell astutely captured what concerned Winter Park residents the most: preserving their beautiful village-esque town for the enjoyment of local residents. While many residents and officials of Central Florida were elated and optimistic about the solidifying commuter rails plans, Winter Park was a microcosm of politically engaged coalitions, determined to preserve the city in its current state.

By November of 2006, adversarial attitudes towards commuter rail in Winter Park prompted the Commission to consider holding a special referendum on the matter. In an effort to allow the voters to speak in numbers, the Commission made strides towards calling a referendum, delaying only “until more information is available about the city's costs of commuter rail.”¹²⁰ The commuter rail decision was shifting away from the preservationist issue of village-like character. Winter Park leaders were concerned about the impending and unquantifiable cost of this project.

In a testament to the tenaciousness of Orange County Commissioners such as Bill Segal, these objections did not remain unheard. Commissioner Segal, in an effort to ensure that Winter Park does not "miss the boat," urged his fellow Commissioners to consider capping Winter Park’s annual spending. In the face of Winter Park officials’ continuous ambivalence, Orange County leaders were considering ways to induce the city’s cooperation with the project. Commissioner John Eckbert best conveyed the city’s attitude towards financial responsibility for commuter rail: "Perhaps Orange County should pay the city because having a stop there would enhance the system," he said, indicating his desire for minimal responsibility on Winter Park’s behalf.¹²¹

Just as Winter Park Commissioners were becoming increasingly uneasy about the financial commitment, the city’s commuter-rail task force presented their findings. Not only did they reveal that “the business community sees the benefit of bringing shoppers downtown to a station in Central Park,” the task force also sought to alleviate Winter Park’s financial concerns:

the task force had calculated that raising taxes by $44.60 on property valued at over $200,000 would provide more than enough funds to cover operating costs.\footnote{Ibid.} Nevertheless, the task force’s optimistic demeanor and practical suggestions were mostly disregarded.

In December 2006, in response to the persistent message that Winter Park cannot afford commuter rail, Orange County agreed to cover nearly a third of their operating cost. Despite this unprecedented financial commitment, Mayor Strong maintained reluctance: "I don’t know if it helps the citizens enough to jump on board," he told the \textit{Sentinel}.\footnote{Christopher Sherman, “County Offers 2 Cities Deal on Commuter Rail,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, December 6, 2006.} By the same token, Strong also rejected a more traditional funding source for rail projects – TOD:

Other counties expect to cover some of the costs through increased development around the stations. Some Commissioners appeared surprised when Strong said his city was not interested in more intensive downtown development.\footnote{Ibid.}

Winter Park officials appeared uninterested in compromise even as Orange County authorities were doing everything in their power to get the city on board. In a strongly-worded editorial, the \textit{Orlando Sentinel} exposed the underlying political motivations of this battle:

But it's not only about money. If the county today agreed to pay all of Winter Park's expenses, we doubt Mr. Strong and the city's Commissioners would yell "All aboard!" The weak-kneed Commission appears committed to giving anti-rail forces a citywide referendum, which they'll work to defeat with the kind of abandon the Commission hasn't come close to using to champion it.\footnote{Mike Copper, “What’s Not to like? Our Position: Winter Park, Maitland Would Be Foolish to Turn down Commuter Rail,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, December 11, 2006.}

Although we cannot be sure how the public felt about commuter rail at the time, it is unquestionable that Strong was committed to stalling commuter rail in Winter Park. Moreover, his reputation as an anti-development champion, riding into office on the coattails of a legal suit challenging the contentious Carlisle development, was setting the tone for the rest of the Commission.

The City Commission spent the last month of 2006 continuously delaying a vote on “deciding whether to ask voters if they want a commuter-rail station in the city's picturesque downtown,”\footnote{Christopher Sherman, “Winter Park Puts Brakes on Rail Decision,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}. December 12, 2006.} just as the \textit{Sentinel} predicted. The civically engaged residents of Winter Park did not take kindly to being denied the opportunity to make their voices heard democratically. They...
sprang into action, collecting signatures for a petition to force a referendum on commuter rail. The *Sentinel* continued to serve as a vehicle for citizen outrage, with local resident Jan Nichols questioning the delay: “Since when is a voter referendum on a matter that will affect every citizen in Winter Park a bad idea?”

The petition drive hit a small snag, collecting an insufficient number of signatures. The Commission rebuffed the uprising, but residents redoubled their efforts. After a second attempt, the Orange County Supervisor of Elections certified the citizen petition. The City Commission “voted unanimously…to pass ordinances asking voters if they want the city to have a commuter-rail stop.” Perhaps the constituent pressure was getting to Mayor Strong, because just a few days later he was fantasizing about a more authoritarian form of government, telling the *Sentinel*, “I'd make a great dictator, but nobody's asked me to be dictator yet.”

In January 2007, the city’s Commuter Rail Task Force voted 10-2 “to recommend building a commuter-rail stop in the city.” In response, the Commission reiterated that commuter rail costs would not be subsidized by development, reminding concerned residents that the city has “safeguards in place to limit the scale, height and density of future development in the central business district.”

Winter Park’s economic and cultural development director Chip Weston indicated that parking would be limited by four hours to prevent commuters from stealing precious spots, and even went further to state:

> The onus is on the city to make sure the citizens know that the protections are in place. The stop would be a lot less frightening for people than…if they thought that it was just going to stimulate unbridled development.

Whereas Longwood was implementing “an urban village around the train station and find[ing] the developers to build it,” Winter Park officials maintained their convictions that dense development would be detrimental to the overall character of the city.

In an interview, Patrick Chapin suggested that commuter rail succeeded in Winter Park because the city leadership at that time was able to amplify the voices of the moderate middle,

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129 Sherman, Christopher, “‘It’s a Fitting Position for Me,’” *Orlando Sentinel*, December 20, 2006.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
rather than attempting to convert the extremists on either side. We can see the beginnings of this strategy under Mayor Strong, as mitigating fears of unbridled development placated the city’s more vocal anti-rail groups.

In late January 2007, the Winter Park City Commission unanimously approved the placement of two commuter rail-related questions on the upcoming March ballot:

i. May the City of Winter Park authorize the use of land owned or controlled by the City…for the construction, renovation, or operation of a commuter rail station?

ii. May the City of Winter Park appropriate or expend city funds for purposes of…supporting any building to use as a commuter rail station within the City? 134

Ballot language was approved “with the understanding that there could be a backdoor way to have a commuter-rail stop in Winter Park even if a majority of voters answered "no" to the questions.” 135 Although Commissioner John Eckbert felt that “there is already a high level of mistrust by residents and such a backdoor maneuver would only make it worse,” the city had legal authority to place a stop “on land not owned by the city, built using federal funds.” 136

The campaign to fill two vacant Commission seats was developing simultaneously. As was becoming standard in Winter Park, the annual March election hinged primarily on the subject of commuter rail. Perhaps in testament to the fractious nature of this issue, both Commissioner Storer and Commissioner DeVane were not running for re-election, leaving non-incumbents to battle for the open seats. 137 Moreover, “factions also are gearing up to debate the pros and cons of commuter rail,” showcasing local residents’ proclivity for issue-based coalitions. 138

The small but engaged group of vocal citizens at Commission meetings might lead a casual observer to believe that residents were overwhelmingly opposed to commuter rail. It would, however, be remiss to hastily conclude that this was truly representative of Winter Park.

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138 Ibid.
attitudes. The skewed influence of the small-but-powerful rail opposition movement and the upcoming referendum prompted the Orlando Sentinel to pose some fundamental questions about voter turnout and electoral politics:

In local ballot proposals like these, few people tend to vote, opening the door to single-issue organizers winning the day. Their wishes, rather than the wishes of the community at-large, often prevail. The proposals also cause elected officials to abrogate responsibility they otherwise would, and should, exercise in deciding public-policy questions.¹³⁹

Thus is the quandary of electoral politics; should elected officials sacrifice good policy for the sake of good politics and democratic proceedings?

The Sentinel, in their impassioned efforts to ensure the success of commuter rail, advised that City Commissioners should make the ballot language advisory, rather than commanding; this would allow the city to take their opinions into consideration, rather than force them to adhere to a binding vote. Once more, the Sentinel is suggesting that perhaps good policy is more important than good politics – here they implore Winter Park officials to press forward with a vital project, despite perceived constituent opposition.

The election for the two open Commission seats was becoming more tumultuous by the day. Candidates placed themselves into categories of anti-rail or pro-rail, anti-Carlisle or pro-development. Candidates Beth Dillaha and Margie Bridges supported using a significant portion of city funds to buy out the Carlisle developers, as well as continuing negotiations and stalling commuter rail for as long as necessary. The Sentinel fervently endorsed the candidates in support of commuter rail, Kit Pepper and Karen Diebel.¹⁴⁰

The election also facilitated the formation of several political action committees, intent on disseminating carefully crafted messages and selectively chosen facts. “Yes, Yes Commuter Rail” financed a town-hall conference with Congressman Mica, educating voters on how their votes would affect the project.¹⁴¹ “Friends of Winter Park,” the “Save Central Park Committee,” and others sent out mailers telling voters that allowing commuter rail in Winter Park would “bring graffiti, drugs and drug traffickers from the ‘West-side community’ to the city.”¹⁴²

Local blogger and anti-rail activist Will Graves wrote that commuter rail would “bring unwanted litter, crime, loitering, drug dealing, and wear and tear to Central Park.”\(^{143}\) Patrick Chapin reflected upon this line of reasoning with disdain: “There's a tone of that in Winter Park, of that elitism ... people were saying that ‘there were going to be those people coming, getting off SunRail, robbing us, and getting back on.’ It was the most ridiculous thing. Those people are filling up our restaurants.”\(^{144}\) Even more incongruously, Graves wrote to the *Sentinel* that resisting commuter rail is a “brave fight against displacement and gentrification.”\(^{145}\) To the contrary, public transit works against the displacement of historically low-income minority communities.\(^{146}\)

The March 2007 election served to showcase Winter Park’s ongoing struggle to reconcile opposition to commuter rail. Each victory was a product of an extraordinarily slim margin and local PACs expended upward of $34,000 in their efforts to “influence the vote.”\(^{147}\) Sustainable development won this battle, but the war had not yet revealed a clear victor.

### Referendum

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ballot Question</th>
<th>Passed?</th>
<th>Percentage of Vote Won</th>
<th>Margin of Victory</th>
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<td>Question 1: Commuter rail station in Central Park?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>269</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 2: Use of city money to build and operate a station?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>372</td>
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### Seat 3

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<tr>
<td>Karen Diebel (pro-rail)</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beth Dillaha (anti-rail)</td>
<td>49%</td>
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### Seat 4

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<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Percentage of Vote Won</th>
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\(^{144}\) Patrick Chapin, in discussion with the author, February 17, 2015.


\(^{146}\) Frumkin, *Urban Sprawl*, 197.

\(^{147}\) Christopher Sherman, “Voters in Winter Park Say ‘yes’ to Rail Station,” *Orlando Sentinel*, March 14, 2007
Voters sent a mixed-message by electing both pro-rail Diebel and anti-rail Bridges to fill the vacant seats, conveying a lack of consensus and ensuring much discord to come. The margins of victory for the referendum reflected an evenly split attitude in Winter Park towards commuter rail – at least amongst those who voted. Ironically enough, several city officials agree that the referendum was “politically motivated to kill [commuter rail];” those most vocal about allowing voters to decide were decidedly in opposition of the project. Anti-rail PACs may have had volume and money on their side, but the “silent majority” defied expectations and brought a marginal, if somewhat unexpected, victory for commuter rail.

The 2007 referendum was instrumental in the fight for commuter rail in Winter Park. For the first time since public transportation was first suggested in 1988, Winter Park voters democratically approved a transportation project that would run directly through Central Park. The gravitas was not lost on the greater metropolitan area: “When Winter Park voters said yes to a commuter-rail station, the vote signaled the first official public endorsement for the major mass-transit system and delivered momentum to a project that's ready for the design boards.”

The referendum allowed Orange County officials, FDOT, CSX, and other authorities to finalize plans for the logistical implementation of a commuter rail system.

Commuter rail’s victory in Winter Park, however marginal, encouraged Orange County Commissioners to revisit the issue of cost-sharing. Winter Park Commissioners who were previously anti-rail hastily changed their tune (or at least muffled it slightly); “Voters indicated growth management is vital,” conceded Commissioner Eckbert, “we need to be a part of the leadership, and commuter rail is a critical part of the solution.”

Evidently the long and tumultuous road towards sustainable development had been traveled to its finish line.

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150 Ibid.
Opponents of commuter rail had come too far, however, to simply concede defeat. Mayor David Strong and Commissioner Bridges were predominantly concerned with the ongoing ambiguity regarding the city’s responsibility for operational costs. While several observers characterized this as a “political smoke screen,” citing the Commissioners’ lack of fiscal concern in other parts of government, financial ambiguity was, at least on the surface, the impetus for continued resistance.\textsuperscript{151}

The month following the landmark referendum was wrought with squabbles amongst the Commissioners. Strong and Bridges lobbied for “escape clause” and some “hard cost caps” in the contract with Orange County.\textsuperscript{152} Consequently, a vote to uphold the contract in its present iteration was called in April 2007. The 3-2 vote of support mirrored the March referendum. Described by a successive mayor as “pretty close to the will of the people,” the winning coalition featured several previously vocal opponents of commuter rail.\textsuperscript{153} This quantitative reflection of resident’s wishes indicates that the electoral process in Winter Park is at least somewhat effective in reconciling the opposition.

Minor disagreements regarding the placement of the station itself followed, but they were focused on diminishing the “aesthetic impacts” upon Central Park.\textsuperscript{154} Opponents were equally concerned about “the type of development that often sprouts up around stations,” indicating the beginnings of this new, interrelated political alignment in Winter Park.\textsuperscript{155} Commissioners eventually voted to place the stop in Central Park regardless, acknowledging that the central business district of Park Avenue would benefit most by having a station directly in its midst.

Just a few months after Winter Park officials acquiesced to commuter rail, Volusia County, Orange County, Seminole County, and Osceola County collectively voted to move forward, “unanimously approving the project that will...become the region's first large-scale alternative to adding pavement as a way to solve traffic congestion.”\textsuperscript{156} Commuter rail secured federal funding in November 2007, merely one day before it was set to be taken off the table.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{151} Ken Bradley and Joe Terranova, in discussion with the author, February 2015.
\textsuperscript{152} “Officials OK Commuter-Rail Agreement,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, May 1, 2007.
\textsuperscript{153} Ken Bradley, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
\textsuperscript{154} Christopher Sherman, “Winter Park Rail Closer to Reality; Station Location Debated as Vote by County Nears,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, April 19, 2007.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Jay Hamburg and Rebecca Mahoney, “Final Vote Seals Commuter Rail; Volusia Passes the Plan, so All Partners Are on Board at Last,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, August 1, 2007.
Winter Park residents may have buckled under the twenty-year buildup of pressure to bring public transit to Central Florida, but that did not mean they were ready to allow unbridled development. The 2008 election predictably focused around the same issues that have plagued Winter Park politics of late: “The city’s residents overwhelmingly want to retain its quaint character but also fear that commuter rail and the proposed rail stop in the city’s downtown commercial district could change that,” noted the Orlando Sentinel.158

As such, the open Commission seats in 2008 were occupied with candidates expressing fiscal caution and character preservation for the city. Phil Anderson and Beth Dillaha both won with comfortable margins of victory, unlike their 2007 predecessors: they garnered 58% and 53% of the vote, respectively. Anderson and Dillaha’s elections represented Winter Park residents’ desire for continuous restraint, despite their acquiescence to commuter rail.159

But commuter rail wasn’t quite a done deal just yet. When the Florida State Senate rejected the project in May of 2008, allowing Winter Park officials some room to maneuver. While Congressman Mica struggled to counter the legislative defeat and asked for local encouragement, Winter Park officials decided against signing a resolution of support. In a testament to the evolution of sustainable development attitudes in Winter Park, Mayor Strong justified the decision with a statement reflecting the political realities at the time: “While I am supportive of commuter rail, as are the majority of our citizens, I do not think the Central Florida commuter-rail project is in the best interest of our citizens financially.”160 In an interview, Strong recalls belying his opinions in favor of good politics: “The citizens did vote to have the SunRail, and so I supported that vote in my votes in the commission.”161

Commuter rail in Winter Park had been through an arduous hiring process; once the opposition was defeated, however, organized committees disbanded and residents were mostly comfortable knowing that commuter rail was coming on their terms. The project had come too

159 Ibid.
161 David Strong, in discussion with the author, March 30, 2015.
far to be entirely undone at this point, but a dispute had nonetheless risen again; this time, it had shifted from “‘Should we do it?’ to ‘How do we pay for it?”’\textsuperscript{162} To meet this challenge, newly elected Commissioners Anderson and Dillaha “met to craft an alternate resolution unique to Winter Park,” stressing fiscal prudence and an escape clause.\textsuperscript{163} This alternative resolution was approved by the Commission, and the concerns of the elected officials were consequently mirrored with renewed vigor by local constituent groups.

In September 2008, Commissioner Dillaha persuaded the Commission to consider renegotiating the rail contract with Orange County. Dillaha explained her desire to obtain more favorable financial terms, but also refused to support any aesthetic measure recommended by the state of Florida in regards to the station itself. In fact, Commissioner Dillaha’s ubiquitous opposition was noticed by the \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, prompting the editors to publish a scathing editorial. Reminding readers that residents and Commissioners voted twice in support of a station just months before Dillaha was elected, the \textit{Sentinel} urged residents to consider her motives:

\begin{quote}
It couldn't be that Ms. Dillaha, who publicly opposed the commuter-rail deal earlier, really wants to derail it, could it? And that Mayor David Strong wouldn't mind seeing that happen either? Couldn't be, Ms. Dillaha repeatedly has said she stands behind what citizens voted for. And Mr. Strong says he's supportive of commuter rail. No reason then for Winter Park voters to sweat the deal. Right?\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

The bitingly sarcastic and thinly veiled accusations prompted Commissioner Dillaha to respond with a letter of her own. In her defense, she stressed her “fiduciary responsibility to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars” and a conviction that Winter Park residents were not mindful of the consequences of a ‘yes’ vote on the 2007 referendum. Many citizens were affronted and resented her disregard for electoral politics; one long-time resident of Winter Park even wrote to the \textit{Sentinel}, expressing his deep offense at Dillaha’s “big sister knows best politics:”

\begin{quote}
Her attitude then and now is insulting to the voters. She believes only she knows what is best for the community and that the voters are ignorant and that their wishes need not be followed. Forget democracy and representative government; Winter Park doesn't need to waste time with elections because the voters don't know what they are doing.\textsuperscript{165}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[162]{Daphne Sashin, “Winter Park Leaders Question Rail Costs: Two Commissioners Seek to Maintain the City’s Commitment but Limit Possible Outlay,” \textit{McClatchy - Tribune Business News}, June 4, 2008.}
\footnotetext[163]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[164]{Mike Copper, “Second Thoughts?: We Think: Winter Park Needs to Keep Commuter Rail on Track,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, September 15, 2008.}
\footnotetext[165]{Charles E. Gordon, “An Insult to Voters . . .,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, September 22, 2008.}
\end{footnotes}
This letter demonstrates how residents might respond if the electoral system were bypassed in efforts to reconcile opposition. If there is to be an alternative consensus-building approach, it would need to include elements of participatory democracy.

The civility within the City Commission began unraveling as Dillaha adopted more overt stances on commuter rail. Commissioner Karen Diebel held a press conference reminding Dillaha by proxy that "it is our job to listen to voters." At a subsequent Commission meeting, Diebel challenged Dillaha’s facts, prompting Commissioner Anderson to step in and ask that officials “refamiliarize themselves with the city's code of conduct during meetings.” Repeated requests for civility occurred as the fractious nature of the City Commission derailed the previous consensus. Meanwhile, Orange County had no intention of renegotiating the contract, rendering the conflict largely obsolete.

In November 2008, Dillaha’s true motives finally surfaced. In a publicly disclosed email to Lakeland Senator Paula Dockery – commuter rail’s biggest state-level opponent – Dillaha revealed the reason for her reservations:

Dillaha says she walks a fine line as an elected official, because city voters agreed in a referendum to allow city land to be used for a stop in Central Park. But, she wrote, she believes commuter rail "represents a huge taxpayer burden with no real benefit" and added that the majority of citizens don't support a station in the park. By "majority of citizens," Dillaha said Friday she meant most of the many people she talked to during her campaign.

This prompted increased discord amongst both the Commission and the residents. The symbiotic relationship between city residents and elected officials is well displayed in Winter Park; in some cases, constituent opposition affected officials’ votes and attitudes; in others, elected officials’ statements of caution ostensibly stirred up residual tensions amongst citizens, giving life to dormant conflicts. “The makeup of the Commission and Mayor certainly impacts the strategic vision and the feel of Winter Park,” observed Patrick Chapin in a conversation with the author, and this relationship is well illustrated by the public reaction to the Commission’s acrimony of late.

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Bloggers bourneoned in Winter Park, publishing online and print editorials either in support of renegotiation or in anger at the renewed discourse. Will Graves, leader of the Friends of Winter Park PAC, wrote a piece in support of Dillaha, accusing Diebel of advancing a pro-development agenda, and asserting that “dozens of noisy buses circulating in Central Park would be an environmental disaster.”\(^{170}\) Graves also analogized commuter rail to the buy-out of the Carlisle developers, advising the city to make commuter rail disappear with taxpayer funds. Renewed discourse on commuter rail facilitated not only criticism of the contract with Orange County, but also the prospect of eliminating commuter rail entirely – again.

Accordingly, Mayor Strong commissioned a memo to Orange County, “outlining six items members would like to clarify or renegotiate.”\(^{171}\) The disposition of the Commission chambers was mixed; some were heartily in favor of bartering a better fiscal deal for the city, while others worried that, nearly two years after residents voted in favor of the stop, city officials were trying to eradicate the project entirely.

Nevertheless, residents and Commissioners had finally come to terms with one thing: if commuter rail were to stop in Winter Park, it would need to be in proximity to Park Avenue. When local developer Dan Bellows suggested an alternate location to alleviate the political rancor of a stop in Central Park, Mayor Strong was ambivalent. He recognized that the proposed 17-92 neighborhood would be “more supportive of growth around the station,” but that it also “wouldn't be right where people want to go right now, which is Park Avenue.”\(^{172}\) Evidently, the long and arduous fight over commuter rail had somewhat transformed Strong’s attitudes.

In the final days of 2008, the commuter rail project was formally named SunRail. Each municipality had committed to the project, state and federal authorities had pledged funding, and timetables were redrawn.\(^{173}\)

On January 28, 2009, nearly six years after the project first began circulating, Winter Park officials voted to reaffirm the city’s commitment to host a stop. In what “should mark the


final go-ahead for commuter rail in Winter Park,” the vote was determined by Mayor Strong, who voted in favor of honoring the agreement.\textsuperscript{174} The turnaround in Strong’s attitude did not go unnoticed; \textit{The Sentinel} openly praised the Mayor for evolving in accordance with the 2007 referendum. It felt as though the war had been won, after countless votes and elections, tense Commission meetings and bitingly sarcastic editorials. SunRail was indisputably coming to Winter Park.

The mayoral election of 2009 was coming up in just two months, prompting some to consider whether Mayor Strong’s sudden turnaround was done with the re-election incentive in mind. Local businessman Ken Bradley was challenging Strong’s seat, and centered his campaign almost entirely around SunRail.

Although Strong maintained his ostensibly pro-rail position, asserting that he voted for it because residents wanted it, Bradley criticized him for wasting so much time beforehand.\textsuperscript{175} Will Graves and likeminded individuals attempted to paint Bradley as a candidate backed by pro-development donors, but Winter Park residents were evidently tired of a mayor who did not bring consensus to the Commission chambers.

David Strong was voted in to office by “disgruntled voters…focused on stopping the four-story Carlisle from being built on Central Park;” in March 2009, he was removed from office by equally disgruntled voters, concerned about his unyielding opinions and use of tax dollars to buy out developers.\textsuperscript{176} Bradley may have supported redevelopment along the city’s main corridors (Fairbanks Avenue, Denning Drive, and U.S. Highway 17-92), but Winter Park residents were willing to overlook that, and voted him in with 53% of the vote.\textsuperscript{177} Political analyst Richard Foglesong placed the blame for Strong’s defeat squarely upon the shoulders of “the rigid contingent that Strong seemed to speak for.”\textsuperscript{178}

An unfortunate defeat in the Florida State Senate prompted the SunRail debate to, once again, rise to the fore of Winter Park discourse. Despite the setback, Congressman Mica (with Mayor Bradley’s help) scrambled to make sure the public knew the deal was still alive.

\textsuperscript{174} Mike Copper, “Strong Outcome: We Think: Winter Park Officials Rightly Did What Voters Wanted on Commuter Rail,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, January 28, 2009.
\textsuperscript{176} Sherman, “‘It’s a Fitting Position for Me.’”
Commissioner Dillaha, however, used the opportunity to invite State Senator Paula Dockery from Lakeland to come speak at a Winter Park Commission meeting. Dockery was on a state-wide campaign to dissuade local municipalities from accepting commuter rail in their town. The wave of anger which emanated from Winter Park residents at the impending visit was insurmountable; e-mails were sent, editorials were written, and press statements were issued. The only person not expressing overt outrage was Commissioner Bridges, who remained the only city official in support of Dillaha’s anti-rail initiatives. Residents were primarily upset that “‘the state's biggest opponent to commuter rail’ is being permitted to address the Commission when city voters approved a rail station in a 2007 referendum.”

The Commission chambers exuded hostility on the day of Senator Dockery’s visit. Patrick Chapin, president of the Chamber of Commerce, local business owners, and many others collectively reminded Senator Dockery of the 2007 referendum. The political rancor was nearly unprecedented, and prompted another brief wave of Winter Park residents to question the fiscal prudence of bringing SunRail to their city.

The 2010 election swept two more “slow-growth” Commissioners into office with very slim margins; both Carolyn Cooper and Tom McMacken prided themselves on “a more-careful approach to how we develop the city.” The months that followed brought a re-negotiation of the contract with Orange County, and a renewed but ultimately vetoed proposal to relocate the stop. In August 2010, the contract was successfully renegotiated without much controversy, and in July 2011, Governor Rick Scott definitively approved SunRail. Winter Park had withstood a two-decade battle over public transit, and sustainable development had seized one solid victory in the city of Winter Park.

Case #3: Transit-Oriented Development (2014-present)

Long before construction for SunRail broke ground, Winter Park began exhibiting concerns about the growth and density that would likely develop around the station. Transit-oriented development (TOD) is considered an integral part of sustainable development; bringing people closer to the transit stops decreases their reliance on the automobile, thus discouraging sprawl. TOD is also frequently used to stimulate the city’s economy and pay for maintenance of the transit station.

The debate over TOD in Winter Park likely began when, in 2006, the *Orlando Sentinel* published an editorial in support of the burgeoning commuter rail project. They hailed commuter rail’s “potential to spawn high-density commercial and residential development” surrounding the various stops along the route.  

Although the *Sentinel* viewed TOD as an economic stimulus and a solution to the stations’ maintenance costs, Winter Park officials were concerned about how a sudden influx of development would alter the traditional character of the city. Residents and elected officials of Winter Park had already indicated that an increase in density is highly undesirable. The proposed Carlisle development was toxic enough to be a driving force in Mayor Marchman’s re-election defeat in 2006. Anti-density attitudes and coalitions were already so influential that Mayor Strong was persuaded to use $3.7 million of city and personal funds to buy out the developers of The Carlisle.  

Later in 2006, Orange County officials pointed out that “other counties expect to cover some of the [commuter rail] costs through increased development around the stations,” and were surprised at Mayor Strong’s unconditional rejection of any increased development.

In the years following SunRail’s approval, city officials recognized that in order for a rail project to be successful, there would need to be supplemental accommodations. Although he wasn’t sure what the answer was, City Manager Randy Knight knew that the impending challenge would be “figuring out how to maximize the benefits of SunRail so that as many

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commuters as possible choose to ride it.”

Although some residents were primarily focused on additional modes of transportation that would supplement SunRail and bring riders to their ultimate destinations, many were fearful of the TOD which may sprout in the process of maximizing benefits. Columnist Chris Jepson encapsulated the latter group’s fears in an editorial: “With the recent opening of the Winter Park SunRail station, bank on increased development ‘pressure’ to construct more nearby high-density housing for residents to walk to mass transportation.”

In fact, the prevalence of TOD in other cities led several Winter Park residents to oppose the commuter rail project back in 2007. In an effort to placate concerns about commuter rail, the city of Winter Park took steps to ensure that there are “safeguards in place to limit the scale, height and density of future development.” In a 3-2 vote, the City Commission adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 2007 which would govern growth and development in Winter Park for the next ten years. The plan included stricter regulations on building heights, variances, and floor-area ratios, and pledged to “maintain the overall low-density ‘village character’ of Winter Park.”

The Comprehensive Plan was heralded in with mixed reactions; those who voted in favor felt it to be an unprecedented but necessary set of restrictions, whereas those who voted against (including Mayor Strong) felt it was “a step backwards” in its permissiveness, and hoped for narrower regulations on the scope of development in the city. Depending on one’s personal opinions on growth and development, the Comprehensive Plan was perceived as either exceedingly pro-development or unnecessarily restrictive.

One year after the new Comprehensive Plan was approved, local developer Dan Bellows brought a new project proposal to the City Commission. Ravaudage was slated to be a complex of offices, performing arts buildings, town homes, and apartments just down the road from the SunRail station. Bellows came to the Commission in December of 2008 to request funding for

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186 Michael W. Freeman, “Need a Ride at the SunRail Station?,” Orlando Sentinel, December 11, 2013.
188 Sashin, “Commuter-Rail Idea Set to Roll out.”
190 City of Winter Park, Comprehensive Plan, 2014.
191 Sherman, “Winter Park Split.”
additional infrastructure that the complex would require.\textsuperscript{192} The project, in its ambitions to provide affordable housing in proximity to a transportation hub, evoked anger in many Winter Park residents, eager to preserve the village character of the city.

The 2010 election ushered in two new Commissioners focused on preserving Winter Park as it is. Carolyn Cooper and Tom McMacken defeated two candidates who were similarly interested in protecting downtown Winter Park but had exhibited openness towards some development. On the same March 2010 ballot was an amendment proposal. Amendment 10 would have required a Commission supermajority (four out of five votes) to approve any changes to the land-use rules in the Comprehensive Plan.\textsuperscript{193} Proponents of the amendment hoped that it would offer added protection to the character of downtown Winter Park, whereas opponents were concerned that the amendment would discourage the access for new businesses to come to Winter Park.

Amendment 10 failed, with 53% of the vote opposing the new requirement. Newly elected Commissioner McMacken, who supported the amendment along with Commissioner Cooper, gave a statement about the discord of this election: “What it tells me is that although that amendment failed, the voters chose two Commissioners who were in favor of a more careful approach to how we develop the city.”\textsuperscript{194} Opposition in Winter Park was still irreconcilable, even in spite of the unusually high turnout of this election.

In March 2011, the election to fill two more Commission seats was equally perplexing, as Winter Park residents elected two supporters of growth and development. Steve Leary and Sarah Sprinkel’s election meant an evenly divided Commission, and there was no consensus in sight. Dan Bellows appeared before the Commission again to discuss his Ravaudage development, presenting plans for a transit station which connects to SunRail. Bellows had completed the preparations and was scheduled to begin construction. It is interesting to note his assertion that development would be slow and steady: “I can't stand the instant, overnight development. You don't want to create a contrived Celebration or Baldwin Park. You want it to evolve.”\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
Before the area had acquired the nomenclature of ‘Winter Park,’ the South Florida Railroad laid tracks down for a route that ran from present-day Sanford to Orlando, right through a beautiful expanse of undeveloped land. At the time, in 1880, just a few residents were living in the yet-unnamed area, with people trickling in to buy land or build a store every so often. In 1881, Loring Chase came to the town, and began platting a city around the train tracks. In what is the original example of transit-oriented development in Winter Park, Chase literally developed streets, neighborhoods, parks, and businesses around the central train stop. Mayor Bradley commented on the irony of Winter Park’s heritage in an interview with the author:

What has so amazed me is that those who fight vehemently development, the train (and it's the same people) all did so with a sense of history. They built the city around the stop! 127.5 years it has stood the test of time. And there are good illustrations of this that have survived around our country.

Dori Stone, director of the Planning and Community Development department, also remarked on the historic nature of public transportation and TOD in Winter Park:

One of the pros of bringing SunRail into downtown was the historical fact that Winter Park had been developed as a train destination. And our downtown already had all the components of TOD.

Present-day rhetoric on TOD politics does not reflect Winter Park’s heritage, however. The crux of the growth debate began in February of 2013, when city staff urged the Commission to re-evaluate the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code. Stone characterized this recommendation as a response to constituent apprehension: “The concern was that the City Commission and the staff had opened up the gates by allowing too much growth.” Consequently, the Commission authorized renowned urban planning firm Wallace Roberts & Todd to conduct a thorough study of Winter Park’s Comprehensive Plan.

In August 2013, a WRT consultant presented her recommendations and proposed changes to the City Commission. The overall tone of the WRT report was that the regulatory-laden Comprehensive Plan served as an impediment to economic development. In a summary of

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197 Ken Bradley, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
198 Dori Stone, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
199 Ibid.
the key challenges plaguing Winter Park development efforts, the report highlighted a lack of consensus across the board – both within City Hall and amongst residents. It also pointed to a “Perceived Conflict between the Notions of Growth and Preservation,” with many officials and residents convinced that the two are mutually exclusive concepts.\textsuperscript{200} The study went on to explain how incongruous this belief is, assuring readers that these goals can exist in tandem:

The goals of historic preservation, economic development, and community growth are not incompatible, and can be harmonized in the community’s regulatory framework. In fact, over-regulation often can hinder investment in preservation.\textsuperscript{201}

The report asserts that Winter Park is not homogenous, rather composed of several neighborhoods, many of which are desperately seeking revitalization and development. The WRT consultants enumerated these points in an effort to combat the goal of preserving the village character of Winter Park.

The report also mentioned that discouraging the proliferation of sprawl is a legal requirement which the city must always keep in mind. On a more fiscal note, the study highlighted the deeply politicized nature of development as an impediment for businesses, driving economic stimulus away from the city. Perhaps the most influential detail of the WRT study was the demonstrated lack of a shared community vision for growth and development.

The WRT study specifically pointed out several key sustainable development components that Winter Park lacks, such as mixed use developments, planned development districts, and multi-family dwellings. The report made several recommendations, but its lasting contribution was the recommendation for a city-wide visioning process. The suggestion arose out of the observable lack of consensus in all arenas of civil life in Winter Park. The report specifically highlighted the “‘us versus them’ factional mentality,” along with the noted political discord in Winter Park: “The political pendulum seems to swing every so often between pro and anti-growth factions. This might not be a problem if each faction did not try to change the plan and codes every time.”\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{200} WRT, “Analysis of Potential Policy and Regulatory Impediments to Economic Development” (City of Winter Park, July 19, 2013).
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
The dissonant tendencies within Winter Park growth politics prompted the WRT consultants to strongly recommend the pursuit of a shared visioning statement by which to guide future revisions of the Comprehensive Plan.

The WRT study served as an eye-opening report of the perpetual struggle to build consensus in Winter Park. It provided a detailed aggregate of these challenges and provided concrete recommendations for the city to pursue. However, its suggestions were not received positively by all. Winter Park Voice columnist Gil Wheeler reiterated concerns about “a skyline increasingly dominated by multi-story office buildings, condominiums, and other high density structures.” Many echoed this sentiment, using print and online outlets for their frustration, while others praised the report for accuracy and insight. Even the reaction to the WRT study reflected precisely the lack of consensus which the report highlighted.

Urban sprawl was mentioned just a handful of times throughout the TOD controversy, each time dismissed as a non sequitur for Winter Park. The prevailing theory was that because Winter Park is a land-locked and relatively mature community, urban sprawl was not an issue for the city; thus, Dori Stone stated that “urban sprawl is not something I think Winter Park is having a problem with.” However, these swift dismissals failed to consider Winter Park’s positioning within a larger, undoubtedly sprawled metropolis. The negative consequences of sprawl have a significant impact on Winter Park residents: automobile dependence, environmental degradation, and traffic are all ails which can be mitigated with sustainable development. In contrast to Stone, staff member Steve Lyman reflected a more nuanced understanding of sprawl, stating that “the definition of 'sprawl' is inefficient use of land; if it's not used wisely and sustainably, it is a waste.” This marked a rare occasion when Winter Park acknowledged the correlation between sprawl and sustainable development.

206 Ibid.
Just a few months after this landmark review of Winter Park sustainable development policy, Dan Bellows came before the City Commission once again to request a revision to the Comprehensive Plan. His vision to transform eight single-family lots into “high density multi-family homes” required a rezoning of the area from R-1 to R-3 and R-4. This meeting of the Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Board was packed with angry and outspoken Winter Park residents worried about the encroaching density. Residents conveyed concerns that the influx of development is unbridled and detrimental to the historic character of the city. Tensions in the room ran high and residents focused their criticism on city staff and officials, saddling them with the responsibility of deciding whether to concede to residents’ wishes or make an independent decision. City staff chose to put forth a compromise by instigating a “step-down” rezoning approach, whereby the land nearest to a large parking garage would remain at the highest height of R-4, but it would scale down to R-1 a few lots down. The opposition coalition at the meeting was not willing to accept this compromise, however, incensed that the city did not outright deny Bellows’ request.

The WRT report rekindled the debate on growth and development, but Bellows’ subsequent request prompted the formation of a new citizens’ movement: Citizens for Managed Growth PAC. Staff’s recommendation of the “step-down” rezoning approach is an illustrative example of the phenomenon Chamber of Commerce President Chapin observed: city staff often has great impact on the outcomes of such debates, but they are “always under the gun...they’ve got to count [Commission] votes...so they tend to sway with the wind, even more so than the public.” Under Mayor Bradley’s leadership, with Commissioners that “were a little more open to the economic value of growth,” city staff was perhaps more willing to accommodate TOD.

In a move that angered the opposition movement even further, city officials agreed to significantly alter road infrastructure to accommodate a new development. In May of 2014, the city voted to extend Lee Road past its original ending point, all the way to Denning Drive. Citizens’ primary concern regarding this cut-thru was traffic; Commissioner Cooper and protestors alike felt that further traffic studies needed to be conducted, rather than succumbing to

208 Ibid.
210 Patrick Chapin, in discussion with the author, February 17, 2015.
the requests of developers. A 4-1 Commission vote, however, allowed a resolution of support for the extension to be sent to the State of Florida.

What is most interesting about the cut-thru controversy is the importance of participatory democracy: during a workshop designed to educate the public on the nature and design of the cut-thru, city officials restricted public comments. When residents vehemently protested during the workshop, “the City ultimately relented and allowed questions from the audience.” Time and time again it has been shown that Winter Park residents value participatory democracy above all else, and it has been imprudent to restrict their democratic outputs. If anything, attempts to restrict public conversation has only backfired in the form of harsh criticism and resentment towards city officials, illustrating the culture of mistrust mentioned in the WRT study.

Opposition to any mention of development mounted as 2014 went on, with a notable presence of frustrated residents at nearly every Commission and P&Z Board meeting. Developer Bellows continued modifying his re-zoning requests, each time diminished in scope at the City’s request. Despite the compromises and decreases in requested density, residents’ resounding opposition only gathered momentum; the conviction that “new and proposed development may gridlock their city streets, crowd the skyline with towering buildings and permanently degrade their quality of life” was their driving force. One element of the opposition also averred that, somehow, allowing higher density townhomes and apartments would decrease the availability of true affordable housing – single family homes.

In response to accusations that they were not respecting the existing Comprehensive Plan, the Commission voted in June 2014 to alter the Comprehensive Plan itself. In a 3-2 vote with Cooper and McMacken dissenting, the City agreed to ask Tallahassee to approve density and floor area ratio (FAR) changes in the plan. This effort to bypass the citizens and take the legal route was not perceived well by the growing number of vocally opposed residents and Commissioner Cooper.

The increasingly commonplace and acrimonious exchange that followed this vote illustrated the division within the current Commission. Commissioner Sprinkel accused

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212 Mooney and Schoene, “Is City Hall Favoring Developers?”
Commissioner Cooper of “inciting” the public with her newsletters, prompting residents to send angry and unwelcome emails to the pro-growth Commissioners. Cooper, in return, retorted with the suggestion that the city hold a visioning exercise to allow more public input, which would render her newsletters unnecessary.

Mayor Bradley, however, was hesitant about such an exercise, because he felt it would be unproductive and unrepresentative of the population’s beliefs as a whole: “If it was 5000 people discussing this in Winter Park, I would feel good about it, but it's the same 12… Those who are against density, etc, in this community are not willing to concede anything.” Two weeks later, Bradley stated that in order to move forward from this stalemate, the city must revisit the Comprehensive Plan and its vision. He expressed a willingness to bridge this divide with a “community-wide scientific process,” in the hopes of ascertaining “the true feelings of all the citizenry.” He also hoped to use visioning as a tool to “guard against the distribution of ‘misinformation.’”

Rather than entertain the notion of compromise, the Citizens for Managed Growth PAC spearheaded the No-Density movement. The group distributed bright yard signs to hundreds of Winter Park residents in an effort to “publicly air their views” about the latest sustainable development initiatives. Elected officials, however, continued campaigning for a new approach to consensus building. While the City waited for Tallahassee to rule on the Comprehensive Plan amendment, Mayor Bradley became a vocal proponent of a visioning exercise.

It took less than a month for Winter Park residents to become equally vocal supporters of a visioning exercise. After years of electoral battles and acrimonious Commission meetings, residents and elected officials alike were in favor of a new, less combative approach. As Director Stone said in an interview, “I think we go through some healing, and I believe that part of the visioning exercise is to bring community consensus and some healing together, and use that as a really great way to educate.” Nonetheless, the chambers of an August Commission meeting were filled with residents carrying the No-Density signs in an effort to protest an amendment to

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215 Ibid.
217 Mooney and Childers, “Comp Plan Uproar.”
218 Ibid.
220 Dori Stone, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
increased allowed density along four-lane roads. The opposition was dismayed that the Commission was still trying to amend the Comprehensive Plan, despite agreeing to a visioning exercise. City staff’s recommendation on the amendment reflected citizen sentiment. Stone suggested that the Commission hold off on adopting such an amendment until after the visioning process. In a rare show of unity, the Commission voted unanimously to hold off, in correlation with the staff’s recommendation.\(^{221}\)

In another illustration of the opposition movement’s influence, Dan Bellows came before the Commission for the fourth time in October 2014. This time, instead of asking the City to rezone the property, he sought approval for twelve, single-family detached units. Anne Mooney, editor of local newspaper Winter Park Voice, characterized this outcome as a democratically-attained compromise:

> The process was noisy, awkward, and frequently very unpleasant. But in the end, it worked. In a demonstration that, against all odds, the system can work for those who are committed to work within it, Bellows and the community arrived at a compromise.\(^{222}\)

Although the concessions were almost entirely one-sided, the implications of the No-Density movement were significant: they had demonstrated their ability cohesively impact local politics, although it is difficult to gauge whether they truly represent the wishes of the entire Winter Park community.

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The 2015 mayoral election presents some insightful data on this question. Shortly after Mayor Bradley announced that he would not be seeking a third term, Commissioner and Vice-Mayor Steven Leary declared his intention to enter the battle. Also contending for the mayoral seat was former circuit judge Cynthia Mackinnon. The election immediately found a focal point: growth and development was at the forefront of every campaign blurb, public debate, and newspaper interview.

Both candidates were equally hastily labeled as either pro or anti development. While Mackinnon embraced the self-imposed anti-development label, Leary was portrayed as

\(^{221}\) Anne Mooney, “Comp Plan Amendment Fails; City Takes Up FY 2015 Budget,” *Winter Park Voice*, September 6, 2014.

shamelessly pro-development by the opposition in spite of his record. As Commissioner, Leary encouraged scaling back various projects to simultaneously promote economic development and preserve the village-like character of Winter Park. However, as a staff opinion of the Winter Park/Maitland Observer noted:

If a candidate or sitting Commissioner ever espoused a view in favor of a new development, they're almost invariably branded as the "development" candidate, with the assumption that they'd allow anything to be built in Winter Park, no matter how monstrous.223

Naturally, the opposition can also find themselves framed as “eager to stifle Winter Park's economic engine, kill Park Avenue and leave the entirety of the tax bill to the homeowners.”224

In fact, campaigns are frequently a matter of public relations, and misinformation seems to have played a key role in swaying the Winter Park vote in 2015. A Mackinnon mailer accused Leary of accepting contributions from developer Dan Bellows, based on misinformation in a newspaper article.225 Although the article later corrected its facts, the mailer was sent out nonetheless, prompting a flurry of defensive responses on both sides. Conversely, when Mackinnon used the term “Negro Town” to describe the historically African American community in the Westside of Winter Park, her opponent’s reaction purposely emphasized the ostensibly racist undertones.226 Leary indicated that he found “her terminology insensitive, divisive and believe there is no place for it in our community,” despite Mackinnon’s historical use of the term.227 The candidates indirectly exchanged scathing open letters by means of campaign mailers.228

A potential conflict of interest during a Commission vote was highlighted as evidence of Leary’s corruption.229 Mackinnon’s assertions that Leary is intent on destroying Winter Park’s heritage were quickly disproven with Leary’s preservationist track record, but political attacks on

223 “How Campaigns Are Deceiving You This Election,” Winter Park/Maitland Observer, February 20, 2015.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid.
228 Frank Torres, “Mackinnon to Leary in Open Letter ‘Shame on You’ in WP Mayor Race,” The Orlando Political Observer, March 1, 2015.
both sides mounted. Finally, when partisan associations were rumored to have contributed to an otherwise non-partisan local election, both candidates found themselves facing accusations of partisan collusion and were forced to defend their mostly irrelevant affiliations. From exaggerated mailers to acrimonious opinion pieces and out-of-context quotes, the 2015 mayoral election was really a public relations competition: whose spin would drive more infuriated voters to the polls?

When asked why she was running, Mackinnon told a local newspaper, “I have watched with growing alarm as our Commission has careened with little, if any, community support from one ill-conceived project to another.” Mackinnon is correct that if one attends a Commission meeting or observes the ubiquitous No-Density signs, it is tempting to conclude that development projects garner almost no support. However, the results of the March 2015 election indicate otherwise. Similar to the shocking turnaround of the 2007 referendum on SunRail, and Mayor Bradley’s landslide re-election in 2012 despite a relatively pro-development track record, Winter Park continues to host what Mayor Bradley calls a “silent majority.” On March 10th, despite an overwhelming abundance of Mackinnon yard signs, Steve Leary garnered 52.25% of the vote. In a turnout of approximately 6,700 voters, a 302-vote margin of victory is fairly commonplace. Resident Valerie Hofferica Reeves noted this predictable vote breakdown on the Winter Park Voice’s Facebook page:

This race was as close as it was because this was a WP election. There are usually about 3000 voters strongly for each candidate. There are about 400 voters undecided in the middle--they are the deciders. This election falls right into that pattern.

Although nowhere near a mandate for Leary, the election statistics disprove Mackinnon’s assertion that the community is wholly opposed to a pro-development agenda.

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It is difficult to tell how the transit-oriented development story will end. Some might agree with Winter Park Voice editor Anne Mooney that it will never end, that Winter Park is destined to forever remain at the contentious crossroads between growth and preservation until a new generation of civically engaged citizens develops.\textsuperscript{236} Others, like Dori Stone, place their hopes in the upcoming visioning exercise, believing that consensus can be reached when all the stakeholders are placed in one room and forced to agree on something.\textsuperscript{237} Regardless, it is evident that two decades of sustainable development turmoil in Winter Park has peaked at an impasse. Consensus on growth in Winter Park may depend on the City Commission’s leadership style; as former Mayor Terranova proffered:

You end up basically with two types of leaders: those who are consensus-builders, and those who believe in sticking their finger in your eye and getting things done that way. If you have a consensus builder, you have the opportunity to get people to work together to come to a conclusion to solve whatever problem there is. But there are some people as leaders who feel "my way or the highway." …nothing gets done that way.\textsuperscript{238}

Mayor Leary would be wise to evaluate his consensus-building strategy, along with the lessons learned from these three Winter Park cases.

\textsuperscript{236} Anne Mooney, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2015.
\textsuperscript{237} Dori Stone, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
\textsuperscript{238} Joe Terranova, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2015.
Lessons Learned

There is no single factor that, if changed, would result in a more favorable climate for sustainable development policy in Winter Park. The constituency is far from homogenous and not all development policy is created equal. Forging consensus and minimizing the negative consequences of urban sprawl in Winter Park will require a strategic, multi-faceted approach. By observing lessons from the three case studies, one could make the political climate in Winter Park significantly more conducive to sustainable growth and development.

1. Party and partisan ideology are not good predictors of growth politics in Winter Park

It is often tempting to fall into the trap of partisan politics when predicting policy stances. However, the Winter Park narrative does not offer a definitive conclusion on this question. Although sustainability and environmental concerns are frequently Democratic initiatives, growth and development policies do not adhere to this pattern. Rep. Mica, Mayor Leary, and Mayor Marchman are registered Republicans and sustainable development advocates. Conversely, Patrick Chapin is left-leaning, and is equally supportive of SunRail and TOD. On the preservationist side, there is also a mix of partisan affiliations. Beth Dillaha and David Strong are both strong conservatives, while Cynthia McKinnon and Anne Mooney are vocal Democrats.

Conservatives vying for government-funded solutions such as SunRail might seem counterintuitive, and yet that is precisely what Rep. Mica worked on for nearly two decades. The most recent mayoral election in Winter Park also displayed a curious partisan phenomenon: when party affiliates on both sides attempted to aid the mayoral campaigns with money and mailers, residents of Winter Park became very angry. Cynthia MacKinnon made it a point to publicly reject help from Orange County Democrats, likely with the knowledge that her support base was not homogenously Democratic. There was nearly unanimous agreement amongst those interviewed for this study that local elections should not accept any partisan aid.
Evidently, national politics do not hold bearing on local growth issues in Winter Park, and should not be used as a predictor of someone’s viewpoint on sustainable development. However, further study on the correlation could be valuable and contribute to the dialogue, using a larger sample size from different cities facing similar issues.

2. Alternative transportation should be an inclusive, regional initiative

The light rail story was an example of a failed transportation initiative. While some Winter Park officials have cited infrastructure concerns to explain their opposition to light rail, it is also useful to consider the greater political climate of the issue. During the initial planning phase, Lynx and FDOT did not confer with the municipalities when debating rail placement, funding, and other concerns. Speaking for Winter Park, Altamonte Springs, Maitland, and other affected regions, Maitland council member Jim Panico told the Orlando Sentinel that "The cities certainly were not consulted on a serious basis. . . . Apparently, no one paid attention to us."\footnote{Ines Davis Parrish, “Light-Rail Line Comes Between Cities,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, September 21, 1997.} This led to feelings of resentment amongst Winter Park officials and residents towards the planning agencies and perhaps even aversion to the project itself. Although Winter Park officials had initially expressed tentative support for light rail, around this time their stance began shifting towards opposition, culminating in the lawsuit of 1999.

In order to avoid exacerbating existing concerns, it is useful for alternative transportation proposals to adopt a regional approach. The planning process must include every affected municipality, and the relevant agencies should operate democratically with regards to their concerns. MetroPlan Orlando, for example, learned from the light rail case, and ensured an inclusive approach during their SunRail efforts. Winter Park officials’ concerns about commuter rail were heard and addressed accordingly, allowing the Commissioners to alter their agreement with Orange County and bring about SunRail on their own terms.

3. Work within the existing infrastructure and minimize physical changes

In addition to the issue of inclusivity, Winter Park officials were worried about the infrastructure changes that light rail required. Both Mayor Terranova and Mayor Marchman
(Commissioner during the light rail initiative) cited those infrastructure concerns as the chief difference between light rail and SunRail. For Mayor Terranova, the proposed infrastructure changes were not enough to sway his support, but they did cause distress amongst the rest of the Commission. Mayor Marchman expressed fear and alarm about the electric center rail, as well as the amount of land that would have been taken by eminent domain, despite his avid support of sustainable development.

During his term as Mayor, however, Marchman became a proponent of SunRail. In an interview, he referenced a lack of infrastructure changes as the primary reason for his support: “Commuter rail was almost a given, in my opinion, because the tracks were in place.”240 Similarly, even though Mayor Terranova still believes that “light rail would've been netter because light rail is designed to serve the community while commuter rail is designed to serve the workers,” he affirmed that “SunRail was a good substitute for Light Rail because you didn't have to make so many infrastructure changes as you did with light rail.”241

In addition to using existing tracks, a regional rail system should bring people to where they want to be. Light rail was too ambitious with its unrealistic ridership goals, but also not ambitious enough with its proposed route. Its primary goal was to connect Downtown Orlando with the tourist district on International Drive and Universal Studios. Although it included a northern leg which would have passed through Winter Park, Maitland, and other Central Florida boroughs, the northern leg was not the main priority. Consequently, the focus on transportation for tourists created the impression that “light rail wasn't connecting...major population areas.”242 In an interview, Mayor Bradley postulated that “the reason why I think, in retrospect, light-rail did not work well in central Florida was that it really wasn't going places where people wanted to be.”243

Moreover, stops and stations should be placed in proximity to both commercial districts and residential neighborhoods, if such junctures exist. Winter Park is, in fact, a perfect example of this principle. Commissioner McMacken pointed out that an FDOT analysis of each SunRail station praises the Winter Park stop for its proximity to economic and entertainment centers.244

241 Joe Terranova, in discussion with the author, February 24, 2015.
243 Ibid.
244 Florida Department of Transportation, “Final SunRail Title VI Program and Nondiscrimination Policy,” April 2014.
The stop is also within walking distance of a select few residential communities. Although most Winter Park residents cannot easily walk to the SunRail stop, there are at least some examples of TOD already in place surrounding Park Avenue, making it the ideal location for a stop. Any additional TOD would not appear as intrusive and out of place as it might feel if the stop were further away from the center of the city.

Using tracks and mechanisms already in place minimizes feelings of sudden and extreme change. Planning a route based on existing population centers incentivizes ridership and encourages TOD. Working within the existing infrastructure should be the goal whenever possible.

4. Implement sustainable development policies gradually and in moderation

Oscar Wilde once famously said, “Everything in moderation, including moderation.” This advice seems especially applicable for growth politics in Winter Park. Sustainable development in this city does not happen overnight: after all, the rail system took more than two decades to finally materialize. In an interview, Commissioner McMacken pondered “Is the issue really change or is the issue growth? And a lot of what I’ve seen is, well, the issue is change.”

Winter Park officials should take care to minimize feelings of upheaval and drastic change in their sustainable development efforts.

SunRail arguably succeeded where light rail had failed due to its comparatively diminished scope. Light rail’s ridership projections, route, and infrastructure were far-reaching and unprecedented for Central Florida. SunRail was inherently less sweeping with its designation as a commuter rail; ridership projections were considerably more modest, and the infrastructure was already in place. This dramatic step-down buffered the amount of change Winter Park residents would have to endure.

During the commuter rail upheaval of 2006-07, city officials frequently referenced the protections built into various city documents, in an effort to assuage fears of “what will grow up around train stations.” Concerns that rail stations “carry the potential to spawn high-density commercial and residential development” had been exhibited by residents and commissioners.

245 Tom McMacken, in discussion with the author, March 17, 2015.
alike, stalling approval of the project.\textsuperscript{247} The Carlisle controversy had occurred well before SunRail’s approval, serving as a concrete example of the density that might occur if they were to allow commuter rail. Consequently, the city’s economic and cultural development director confronted fears of increased TOD using the Orlando Sentinel:

\begin{quote}
   The onus is on the city to make sure the citizens know that the protections are in place. The stop would be a lot less frightening for people than . . . if they thought that it was just going to stimulate unbridled development.\textsuperscript{248}
\end{quote}

The protections Chip Weston is referring to include the land-use plan and the relatively new Comprehensive Plan, which “limit the scale, height and density of future development in the central business district.”\textsuperscript{249} Mayor Strong, one of SunRail’s most vehement critics, also reflected on the power of safeguards that were put in place, mitigating some of his fiscal concerns with the project: “The commitment to the SunRail was limited to a certain amount of dollars, which is probably manageable.”\textsuperscript{250} Evidently, enough Winter Park residents were similarly appeased with these safeguards, and when the 2007 referendum rolled around, SunRail became an electorally approved reality.

Another example of the moderation tactic in action is best illustrated with Commissioner McMacken’s words:

\begin{quote}
   We have a stop here, not a station. We fought very hard for that, because we don't have a parking garage or a 500-car parking lot associated with our stop. We are not a station, and that differentiator was extremely important to me. Because I don't want this to be a huge parking lot. This is a stop on the line that you get off on and come visit.\textsuperscript{251}
\end{quote}

The City Commission was able to promote SunRail with a compromise, supplying Winter Park with the benefits of alternative transportation and alleviating the fear of increased traffic.

This lesson can be applied as Winter Park moves forward with TOD initiatives. As Chip Weston said, “the onus is on the city” to ensure that development is not unbridled. Within legal and reasonable limits, the city can allow for moderate increases in density, without sanctioning 15-story skyscrapers. This would, perhaps, placate residents who fear that density will ruin the character of Winter Park.

\textsuperscript{248} Sashin, “Commuter-Rail Idea Set to Roll out.”
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{250} David Strong, in discussion with the author, March 30, 2015.
\textsuperscript{251} Tom McMacken, in discussion with the author, March 17, 2015.
However, moderation should also be in moderation. Here, former Mayor Marchman discusses Winter Park’s growth and preservation cycles:

Winter Park has been cyclical…when I was serving as mayor, we went through very much the growth cycle....A number of people got concerned about the amount of growth, and then we had myself, I was beaten in an election pretty badly, and all 4 of the commissioners that were serving with me chose not to run again. And then we had a period of time there in which there was a little bit more of a slow down, but then the current mayor and commission are back on the growth cycle.  

Given this swinging political pendulum, Winter Park officials should recognize when the city is well-positioned to implement growth policies without fear of retribution, and pursue them accordingly.

5. Be loyal to the heritage

Few interviewees mentioned Winter Park’s historic designation as a train-stop town. The city was literally platted around the central train stop located near present-day Park Avenue. Over the 19th Century, the town developed and became a sizeable municipality, but the downtown train station still exists. Today, it accommodates the SunRail stop, the Amtrak station, and freight shipments. As the original example of TOD, Winter Park would only be bolstering its heritage and existing TOD components by continuing to develop small-scale projects around the SunRail station. Bringing people closer to the alternative transportation in place would boost the city’s tax base, property values, and SunRail revenue.

Consequently, it is perhaps surprising that the opposition movement frequently refers to preservation as their underlying motivation. Framing TOD as an initiative that is fully in compliance with Winter Park’s heritage would somewhat refute the preservationist aspect of the opposition’s platform. Focusing on this historical aspect might alleviate fears of rapid modernization and change, while allowing Winter Park to become more sustainable.

6. Consider the staff

252 Kip Marchman, in discussion with the author, February 5, 2015.
Elected officials are sometimes perceived as all-powerful beings, waving a mighty specter. In small city government like Winter Park, however, city staff potentially wield more influence. The Planning and Zoning (P&Z) board, for example, makes recommendations to the Commission, approves or denies projects, works with developers to modify the design and scope of their plans, and can seek out new development opportunities. P&Z Board member Pete Weldon discussed, in an interview, his efforts to preserve the seemingly intangible Winter Park character in a new Whole Foods project:

I've been trying to get shade trees instead of palm trees; I've been trying to get more setbacks from the road; and I've been trying to get real bricks on the pathways...and I've been trying to get the Winter Park decorative lighting...so that we get at least some of that character without having formal design guidelines, we at least ask for some of the dimensions of Winter Park character that I think most people would agree with.253

Given their purview and ability to shape growth projects, it is wise to consider how city staff might be influenced by various political climates. After all, as an article in the Winter Park/Maitland Observer stated, “elected councils come and go; staffs can be in it for the long haul. Your civic employees (and their perspective, knowledge and values) are indispensable in creating and maintaining a livable community.”254

The growth cycles described earlier by Mayor Marchman are equally applicable in this lesson. The competing cultures of growth and preservation could very well affect how a P&Z board might approach various projects. Even more so, the composition of the City Commission influences the staff’s decision-making. In an interview, Patrick Chapin spoke extensively of this phenomenon:

Staff is always under the gun...they've got to count votes...so they tend to sway with the wind, even more so than the public, because if the public votes in a Mayor Strong or Beth Dillaha, then the staff that has been there for 20 years is saying 'okay I kind of understand the atmosphere here.' Then Mayor Bradley comes in, and Steve Leary and Sarah Sprinkel, and I think the staff consciously decides 'okay, now I can be a little bit more liberal in my interpretation of things, I can be a little bit more open to ideas.' In that respect it really impacts how the opportunities are being delivered. It's the staff following the tone of the mayor and the commissioners.255

253 Pete Weldon, in discussion with the author, March 25, 2015
255 Patrick Chapin, in discussion with the author, February 17, 2015.
Accordingly, sustainable development could find an ally in city staff, but only if they feel comfortable supporting these projects without fear of retribution from the Commission or the public.

7. Dispel the myth of affordable housing

One particular group of Winter Park residents, typically referred to as the Westsiders, was concerned about more than just the density aspect of TOD. For the Westsiders, the fight against TOD was also a fight for affordable housing:

During months of debate over this development and others in the area, citizens have expressed their concern that the city seems to support affordable housing primarily in the form of over-built, rack-'em-stack-'em apartment complexes that choke the city with unwanted and inappropriate density of development.256

Conversely to the opposition’s opinion, affordable housing is actually a key component of sustainable development: “Poor people and people of color are disproportionately affected” by urban sprawl, and thus sustainable development movements advocate for a range of housing options.257 The Smart Growth Manual discusses how cities should tackle the issue of affordable housing:

The burdens of concentrated poverty are best overcome by distributing lower-cost housing throughout the region… Such housing should be located principally in places where proximity to transit provides ready access to jobs and services without the added financial burden of automobile ownership.258

The Manual goes on to illustrate how one county in Maryland “has required all large developments to include 10 percent of affordable dwellings.”259 This model, applied in Winter Park, would not only assuage residents’ fears about affordable housing, but it would also enable the city to reap the benefits of property tax revenue. Without properly educating residents and conveying these options to the City Commission, however, popular opinion will prevail, and elected officials would be prudent to stay away from any measures that perceivably threaten affordable housing.

257 Frumkin, Lawrence, and Jackson, Urban Sprawl and Public Health, 198.
258 Andres Duany, Jeff Speck, and Mike Lydon, Smart Growth Manual (McGraw Hill, 2010).
259 Duany, Speck, and Lydon, Smart Growth Manual.
8. Annual elections may be causing voter fatigue and depressing the moderate vote

Winter Park’s election cycles are organized such that every March, voters have the option of going to the polls and electing a new commissioner or mayor. However, as one elected official stated, “there's no question that there's fatigue.”\textsuperscript{260} Accordingly, studies have shown that “the more frequently elections are held, the less likely it is that an individual will vote in any given election.”\textsuperscript{261} Although this hypothesis is typically used to explain the turnout correlation between primary and general elections, the same theory can be applied to local politics. Data has shown that calendar variables (such as the proximity of the primary to the general election) have a relatively strong negative correlation with voter turnout.\textsuperscript{262} Thus, it can be similarly hypothesized that the frequency of elections in Winter Park is depressing voter turnout. Of course, annual elections “may give citizens the opportunity to carefully consider each individual vote, but the costs of going to the polls with such frequency are almost certain to drive down political participation among all but a small subset of the community.”\textsuperscript{263}

A further challenge associated with low turnout is characterizing this “small subset of the community.”\textsuperscript{264} Studies have shown correlations between higher turnout and higher participation of Independent voters.\textsuperscript{265} Could it, consequently, be hypothesized that the civically engaged minority is more polarized in their opinions? If “non-voters are slightly less opinionated on these sorts of questions [policy, partisan and ideological preferences],” then perhaps consensus on growth and development in Winter Park could be achieved with higher turnout.\textsuperscript{266}

Without concrete data analysis, it is difficult to state this with certainty, but the phenomenon of voter fatigue in Winter Park has been observed by several current and former elected officials. Former Mayor Strong noted that “when there's a real controversial issue, it's

\textsuperscript{260} Elected official 1, in discussion with the author, March 31, 2015
\textsuperscript{262} In fact, the only variables to exhibit stronger coefficients are socioeconomic variables, such as age and education. (Benjamin Highton and Raymond E. Wolfinger, "The Political Implications of Higher Turnout," \textit{British Journal of Political Science} 31, no. 1 (2001): 179-92.)
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{266} Highton and Wolfinger, "The Political Implications of Higher Turnout," 187.
going to get a lot of attention, and therefore you're going to get the more radical positions on either side to come out." An extremist influence would be especially exacerbated by an already low turnout of moderate voters. Moreover, as one elected official pointed out, “it is very difficult to take a long-term perspective when you know that there's an election coming up annually.” When the Commission is consistently falling prey to the re-election incentive, it leaves little time for them to properly govern and address concerns with a moderate approach.

Winter Park sustainable development politics could stand to benefit from electing more moderate leaders who would actively build consensus. Aside from diminishing the frequency of elections, turnout could also be increased by encouraging civic engagement through “citizen-initiated ballot measures,” and other GOTV techniques. If Winter Park could combat voter fatigue by reforming its election cycles and enticing more moderates to the polls, perhaps polarization would be hampered in favor of consensus.

9. Encourage a climate of trust between elected officials and residents

Mayor Marchman predicted that Mayor Bradley’s surprising electoral success in spite of his pro-growth stance could be attributed to his trustworthiness. Mayor Bradley was a native of Winter Park, and had gathered a lifetime of friends and colleagues who trusted his ability to build consensus and lead the city: “I think they knew him,” Marchman said in an interview, “they had gone to school with him, and very often when you're looking for someone to serve you, you'd like it to be somebody you have some personal contact with or you know.”

Trustworthiness extends far beyond elections, however. Unfortunately, in Winter Park “when some people decide that they are vehemently opposed to what the current commission is even thinking about...their response to that is to try to undermine the credibility and trust of the Commission,” as Pete Weldon pointed out in an interview. The WRT study commissioned by the City also noted a significant culture of distrust between elected officials and voters: elected officials frequently exhibited the mindset that voters are not astute enough to elect competent

268 Elected official 1, in discussion with the author, March 31, 2015.
270 Kip Marchman, in discussion with the author, February 5, 2015.
servants in the future, and the onus is therefore on current officials to amend the comprehensive plan according to their individual beliefs.

Surpassing the rancor of sustainable development politics in Winter Park will require reciprocal trust between the Commission and the residents. As Commissioner McMacken said and many others echoed, “there has to be trust;” trust that the residents are capable of forming intelligent opinions and trust that the Commission will dutifully make decisions based on the community vision. There needs to be trust that both elected officials and city staff are well-qualified, uncorrupt, and capable of making objective decisions.

10. Foster a constructive dialogue amongst the City Commission

The Sunshine Law in the State of Florida is intended to increase government transparency in local municipality proceedings. Transparency and access to government meetings, records, documents, and other information is certainly an undeniably noble goal. However, this law has one potentially detrimental side effect: it significantly hampers dialogue between elected officials. Commissioner McMacken was particularly adamant about this law hindering his ability to have a constructive conversation with a fellow commissioner:

It's disappointing, in one context, the severity of our Sunshine Laws in the State of Florida, because ... I can't call a fellow commissioner and say "Here's what I think, what do you think?" You have to wait until you're on the dais...I would love the opportunity to sit down on a regular basis outside of the dais; it needs to be in public, it needs to be in a public forum, but to sit down...and just talk...When you're sitting on the dais and every word is transcribed, you can't have the kind of conversation we are having.273

Creating a more favorable political climate requires not just bringing the community together, but also mitigating the divisiveness of the Commission. It is telling that Commissioner McMacken recalled only one instance during his term as commissioner when he attempted to sit down with an elected colleague and discuss some of these issues. Working out differences and arriving at compromise requires open and frequent dialogue, which cannot occur when private meetings are discouraged. Another elected official also spoke to the hindering nature of this law:

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272 Tom McMacken, in discussion with the author, March 17, 2015.
273 Ibid.
It definitely hampers things. I get the reason, and I get the rationale for it...in practice, it’s really challenging. There's a reason that the State legislature didn't enact it on themselves, they put it on us, but they can do whatever they want...It's going to do damage to the process, because there's now going to be innuendo, there's going to be hurt feelings. Things will go unaddressed.\textsuperscript{274}

Although the City of Winter Park itself has no control over the Sunshine Law and must act accordingly, it has been suggested by one elected official that the law is perceived as more restrictive than it actually is. This official believes that commissioners are using the legislation as a pretext to hamper communication, and that officials could do a better job of communicating within the context of the law: “It's not the reality, it's the perception...I think there's nothing in the law that prevents that, it's all about the culture.”\textsuperscript{275} Nonetheless, it would be prudent for the State of Florida to reconsider how this law is affecting compromise in local governments, and for local officials to make a concerned effort to hold constructive dialogue amongst themselves in spite of the cumbersome process.

\subsection*{11. Focus on the aesthetic and implement loose design guidelines}

Resistance to higher density buildings in Winter Park is more than just resistance to an influx of people; Winter Park residents seem to be in fear of looming skyscrapers and “the type of development that often sprouts up around stations.”\textsuperscript{276} However, it is possible to assuage fears of “concrete monstrosities” by showing residents that there is a way to build aesthetically pleasing and contextually appropriate developments.\textsuperscript{277} A comment on an article about TOD in Winter Park perfectly encapsulated this lesson:

\begin{quote}
I understand that people are moving into Florida and we cannot close the door, so we either sprawl out or go up. But there are design solutions to going up, even in Winter Park. You don't put five stories at the back of a sidewalk. You either set back or you put two or three stories at back of sidewalk and five or six stories inside. And in Winter Park we can and must demand quality design and finishes.\textsuperscript{278}
\end{quote}

When asked if he would support transit oriented density in Winter Park, former Mayor Strong said, “I think its appropriate in areas closer to I-4, on Fairbanks. That area is, I think, ripe for

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{274} Elected official 1, in discussion with the author, March 31, 2015.
\textsuperscript{275} Elected official 2, in discussion with the author, April 6, 2015.
\textsuperscript{276} Christopher Sherman, “Winter Park Rail Closer to Reality; Station Location Debated as Vote by County Nears,” \textit{Orlando Sentinel}, April 19, 2007.
\textsuperscript{277} “We’ll Miss You, Mount Vernon Inn,” \textit{Orlando Weekly}, August 26, 2014.
\textsuperscript{278} Jepson, “No More Barns in Winter Park.”
\end{footnotes}
redevelopment at some point, and I think that access to transportation hubs is where higher
density is supposed to be.”279 Another elected official opposed to density similarly conceded that
TOD would be acceptable, further away from Park Avenue and closer to I-4. Both have a keen
understanding of TOD, and even support its underlying goals, but are worried that higher density
surrounding the SunRail station “would take away greatly from the character of Winter Park.”280

What if it were possible to build aesthetically pleasing higher-density developments in
downtown Winter Park? Indeed, when pressed, Strong conceded that he would support TOD in
Winter Park if it were visually appealing and fitting with the surrounding development. He
further illustrated this concession with an anecdote: “I was just in a property in L.A. - an
apartment property - it was four stories, it was very very high quality, it would fit into Winter
Park anywhere.”281 Another anti-density elected official echoed Strong’s sentiments about
quality and mentioned the importance of “visible open space” as requisite for higher density:

The real issue is setbacks to support trees, visual expansive open space. I think you can deal with
a lot more density if, when you drive down the road, you look and you see expanses and open
spaces. 282

Not all developments are created equal, and the aesthetic solutions for adhering to Winter
Park’s village character are endless. Consequently, the challenge is figuring out how the city of
Winter Park can implement design guidelines without infringing upon property owners’ rights.
Various interviewees have mentioned different mechanisms that the city could pursue, all of
which warrant consideration.

Anne Mooney suggested an architectural review board to prevent the “ugly developments
that are going on around here,” and two others supported this type of design overview.283 One
elected official provided implementation suggestions for this kind of oversight: “We need a city
architect and we need a design review board, and it needs to be comprised of only professionals,
and it needs to be circulated; it needs to be a revolving committee, and we can't stay on it longer
than 2 years.”284

279 David Strong, in discussion with the author, March 30, 2015
280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
282 Elected official 2, in discussion with the author, April 6, 2015.
283 Anne Mooney, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2015
284 Elected official 2, in discussion with the author, April 6, 2015.
Others were not as supportive of this idea, as they worried it may be too imposing or too cumbersome. An elected official dismissed an architectural review board as too intrusive, but suggested an alternative:

I don't believe in any architectural review committee, as a hand-fist way of trying to get good design...I would love to figure out a way to encourage good design. I've reached out to some of the better known architects and developers in our community already, to ask them "How do we engage that in the process? And how do we get better design? How do we get more Hannibal Square and less Sand Lake Road?"...I think there's a way to incentivize it rather than de-incentivize it.285

In this official’s view, rather than imposing fines or punishments for failing to adhere to a certain design guideline, it would be more effective to incentivize quality design and development as a way of ensuring aesthetic appeal. As an example, “if you would take some recommendations on materials used, on layout, on egress, on finishes, we would grant you a variance to increase the size of your property by 5,000 square feet.” 286 Pete Weldon also concurred that “rather than have an architectural board...I think there is a middle ground that says 'Well, let's have some design guidelines that apply in all the commercial areas of Winter Park that reflect the character we want to see.'”287

Commissioner McMacken brought up an already existent tool which would aid the challenge of implementing design guidelines:

We have this wonderful mechanism ... called a conditional use in Winter Park. In the past that's kind of been a catch all, safety net, that says that the building over a certain size requires a conditional use ... We used that tool to say, architecturally, landscape-wise, whatever, here is what it needs to look like to be in Winter Park.288

The Comprehensive Plan is also a tool that can be used towards this end. Many have commented on how complex and burdensome the Plan is currently. However, the Plan serves to detail the city’s vision and provide guidelines for that vision’s execution. Thus, broad design guidelines could be written in (in addition to the ones already in place) to ensure that TOD in Winter Park is aesthetically appealing. As Commissioner McMacken said, “here's some basic proportional

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285 Elected official 1, in discussion with the author, March 31, 2015.
286 Ibid.
287 Pete Weldon, in discussion with the author, March 25, 2015
288 Tom McMacken, in discussion with the author, March 17, 2015.
directions that an architect could take and design two or three different building styles, but they operate within those very basic design guidelines.”

12. The electoral process is mostly ineffective at forging consensus

Nearly every elected official interviewed for this study asserted that their views on sustainable development had not changed throughout the process of campaigning or serving in office. Only Mayor Bradley confidently asserted that his views had been completely changed by politics – mostly by making them more concrete. Mayor Terranova also stated that his views had been reinforced during his time in office. Nearly every person interviewed mentioned the rancor and divisiveness caused by campaigns.

Even more curiously, when asked about whether they make their decisions based on personal beliefs or public opinion, most adamantly asserted that they stuck to their personal beliefs. Mayor Bradley reflected on this trend in an interview:

There are certainly things that you pursue because it's the right thing to do. All the polls, all of your pundits, all of your political advisors, all of your supporters cannot dissuade you from that. There are matters of good conscience. So when you face the matter of good policy and good politics…good policy always wins. If you come to elected office, and come to serve, and don't worry about the consequences of whether you're going to get re-elected, it may change your tone, but ultimately it shouldn't change your vote.

This position blatantly defies the electoral incentive, indicating that constituents and other outside forces generally had no sway on their votes. In fact, one of the only observable instances of popular will influencing Commission votes is the 2007 referendum on commuter rail. The Commission’s vote of support mirrored the outcome of the referendum, featuring several previously vocal rail opponents. However, yielding to popular will is not analogous with consensus, and one can argue that vocal factions have polarized growth politics in Winter Park.

As evidenced by the most recent Mayoral campaign in 2015, elections in Winter Park generate divisiveness and polarization. Many elected officials and community members proffered this observation, noting the growing divisions amongst both commissioners and

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289 Ibid.
290 Ken Bradley, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
residents. Campaigns breed political rancor that crystallizes into resentment, distrust, and discord. As Pete Weldon observed,

> Politics is a competition. While many people like to couch their community views in kum-ba-ya stuff, when it comes down to it, the reason two people compete to be on the commission ... is that they believe their views deserve to be the ones that influence the future of the city.\(^{291}\)

In other words, the electoral process is unlikely to facilitate true consensus growth and development issues in Winter Park.

13. Use educational initiatives to build consensus

If the electoral process is ineffective at forging consensus on sustainable development in Winter Park, alternative approaches should be explored. Mayor Strong said, in an interview, “I think everybody, including me, are a little scared of changing something when they don't know enough about it.”\(^{292}\) There are many mechanisms already in place within the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Codes to curb unbridled development. Moreover, projects that have built under current Comprehensive Plan have been protested by the very people who advocate sticking to the Comprehensive Plan. Clearing up misconceptions about the existing safeguards and complexities may assuage some fears and allow for sustainable development to happen in moderation.

Pete Weldon pointed out that much of opposition to TOD has stemmed from a lack of understanding about property rights and the government’s discretionary ability. To help clear up some of these matters, he proposed a city-wide educational process:

> We have to give them the opportunity to know how it works, to know how development works, to know how the city's risk exposure is managed with regards to what we approve and what we don't approve. We have to get them to understand what the word ‘entitlement’ means. And those are not simple concepts, but until we get a mass of people who understand what's going on, who understand the context, when somebody screams bloody murder to their neighbors about the goddamn city doing this or that, somebody's got to be there to say ‘Hey wait a minute, I'm not quite sure that what you're saying is right.’\(^{293}\)

\(^{291}\) Pete Weldon, in discussion with the author, March 25, 2015
\(^{292}\) David Strong, in discussion with the author, March 30, 2015
\(^{293}\) Pete Weldon, in discussion with the author, March 25, 2015
In his blog, Weldon also states that “Citizens need to understand where the city has effective sway over development proposals and where it does not, the meaning of ‘entitlement,’ ‘conditional use,’ and ‘zoning,’” in addition to matters of property rights and legal consequences.\(^{294}\) He suggests that the city distributes a primer explaining these matters and the city’s development process to each resident in Winter Park. Additionally, he recommends that “the city, in its quarterly mailings, ought to have a section every quarter that goes to every citizen that says ‘About development this quarter.’”\(^{295}\)

The city’s communication department had also been cited by two interviewees as a possible source of education. One elected official expressed the desire for the communications department to “be more about marketing and less about PR,” and for the department to engage in the type of educational distributions on development that Weldon suggested.\(^{296}\) Dori Stone also touched on the subject, expressing her frustration at city staff’s difficulty with education:

> How do we educate the public? We don't have the ability to blog, we don't have the ability to send letters to the editor. I don't believe that is staff's place...Normally that comes through our staff reports. I know that those can be difficult to read, so I hope that the visioning, we use that as a point of educating.\(^{297}\)

Debates are another educational alternative that may foster constructive dialogue amongst the citizens. As one elected official proposed,

> I would love to have open forums about property rights versus historic preservation, preservation of a city's culture and ethos...Can we have a conversation with two reasonable people get up there and talk about historic preservation versus property rights?...I think rather than attack one another, you could see how you would agree on a majority of things.\(^{298}\)

This official hopes that debates would present a point of departure for the opposing groups; if they understood the things they have in common, there is hope for compromise and common ground.

Having a fully informed citizenry would hopefully aid in consensus building and allow Winter Park to move forward from the political rancor plaguing its TOD initiatives. As Weldon said in his blog, “the more citizens understand our development realities, unfounded fears and


\(^{295}\) Pete Weldon, in discussion with the author, March 25, 2015

\(^{296}\) Elected official 1, in discussion with the author, March 31, 2015.

\(^{297}\) Dori Stone, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.

\(^{298}\) Elected official 1, in discussion with the author, March 31, 2015.
reactionary sentiments will fade in influence to the benefit of thoughtful consideration and productive changes.”299

14. Always opt for participatory democracy

We have already learned that trying to muscle through policy in civically engaged communities such as Winter Park only aggravates and alienates the constituents. It can also be observed that disregarding the opposition’s opinion is equally ineffective. Mayor Bradley was accused on many occasions of being disrespectful to the community when, during meetings, he stopped citizens from commenting on an issue after it had been closed. Feelings of resentment festered and the growth opposition movement strengthened in resolve. Perhaps a subset of this lesson should be, “Thou shalt not cut off the person at the dais.”

In addition to education, participatory democracy exercises are the prescription for Winter Park consensus-building ails. It is requisite for the key players who believe their views are in conflict to find areas of agreement, and work on conflict resolution within the context of reconciliation. As Mayor Strong said, “Frankly, I think that there are very very few differences between a preservation perspective and a growth perspective, and my goal in the visioning process is to see what those differences are, because I don't think they're tremendous.”300 The city is currently pursuing a visioning exercise, with the hopes that it will “bring community consensus and some healing together, and use that as a really great way to educate.”301 A visioning exercise is just one of the many exercises in the consensus-building toolbox. These public involvement techniques “provide a time and place for face-to-face contact and two-way communication-dynamic components of public involvement that help break down barriers between people and the agencies that serve them.”302 Moreover, “deliberative and participatory governance processes have characteristics that separate them from traditional aggressive governance (i.e., the counting of votes to select preferences).”303 These exercises are ideal for

299 Weldon, “Visioning.”
300 David Strong, in discussion with the author, March 30, 2015
301 Dori Stone, in discussion with the author, February 23, 2015.
communities that struggle with building consensus through the electoral process, such as Winter Park. See Appendix E for a detailed list of consensus-building exercises.

The current visioning exercise has been received with mixed results amongst the people interviewed for this study. Approximately 33% of those interviewed believe that the visioning process will forge consensus on growth issues. 25% have low or no hopes for the visioning exercise building consensus. Around 42% believe that the exercise could work, with a few modifications or caveats.

One of the caveats mentioned nearly ubiquitously was outreach and scope of participation. In an interview, Commissioner McMacken addressed concerns about past visioning exercises that have failed in these terms:

I think the problem in the past is that outreach hasn't been as broad and we haven't tried to find the unreachables. We've opened the doors and said "you're all welcome," and whoever came, that's the direction we went.\(^{304}\)

In order to have a truly comprehensive community vision, it is necessary to attract more than just the key players. As one elected official said, “Unfortunately, when the extremes take over the discussion, it becomes a monologue rather than a dialogue and there are two sides screaming at one another and nobody is listening.”\(^{305}\) The key to reducing polarization and achieving true compromise rather than constant swings in the political pendulum is to bring the moderate middle to the table.

The second modification that many have proposed is to have the visioning exercise directly inform a review of the Comprehensive Plan. In July 2014, the City Commission voted for exactly this; the initiative failed to garner the necessary three votes, with only Mayor Bradley and Commissioner Leary in support.\(^{306}\) The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) suggests that participatory governance exercises must “make clear the link between meeting input and decision-making.”\(^{307}\) Thus, as Mayor Strong said in an interview, “If the vision changes, the comprehensive plan should be changed...if there is a unanimity of a vision, no question that the comprehensive plan should be changed to support it.”\(^{308}\) Not only will this increase the city’s

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\(^{304}\) Tom McMacken, in discussion with the author, March 17, 2015.

\(^{305}\) Elected official 1, in discussion with the author, March 31, 2015.


\(^{307}\) “Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making.”

\(^{308}\) David Strong, in discussion with the author, March 30, 2015
credibility, it will also create a sense of ownership amongst the participants. The fruits of their labor have a tangible influence upon the future of development. As Anne Mooney observed,

> If they would do the visioning...as part of the necessary comp plan update that's going be scheduled anyway, and people bought into the changes to the comp plan and could agree on that, then they would be invested. Bringing them together is pointless, unless you get them to buy into the plan. Once they're invested, then you can get people to sit on the bathmat together.  

Finally, one elected official stressed the importance of interactive participation. Rather than sitting in an enclosed room, watching presentations and observing pictures, this official suggested that an alternative:

> I don't want to do it in a room, I want people to take it out into the street and stand beside it and say, "What is good, and what is bad about this development?"...I would like people to be able to see what they're talking about...We have every possible kind of development.

There are a few additional ways city officials can increase the chances of consensus with this visioning exercise. The DOT recommends that participatory exercises should be “frequent enough and well-focused enough on issues to demonstrate agency concern about public involvement.” The visioning exercise should be treated as an educational vehicle, clearing up some of the aforementioned complexities and planning tools. The importance of the aesthetic can also be addressed during the visioning exercise, showing participants that a high-density development could be beautiful and conform to the surrounding character.

Forging consensus in Winter Park on the issue of sustainable development is not a simple task. Bridging the crystallized divisiveness amongst both residents and elected officials will require a complete overhaul of the current political climate. By observing these 14 lessons, city staff and officials can work towards overcoming the staunch opposition to TOD and other growth initiatives in Winter Park.

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309 Anne Mooney, in discussion with the author, March 15, 2015  
310 Elected official 2, in discussion with the author, April 6, 2015.  
311 "Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making."
Appendix A
Map of Winter Park, with landmarks

Source: https://cityofwinterpark.org/docs/residents/helpful-maps/cultural-downtown-map.pdf
Appendix B

Light-Rail route

APPENDIX C
SunRail Route

Source: http://realestatewall.com/orlandology/sunrail-update
## Appendix E
Participatory Governance Exercises for Consensus Building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Meetings/Hearings</td>
<td>Meetings allow for face-to-face contact and two-way communication-dynamic components of public involvement that help break down barriers between people and the agencies that serve them. Meetings give agencies a chance to respond directly to comments and dispel rumors or misinformation.</td>
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<td>Open Houses/Open Forum Sessions</td>
<td>People drop by at their convenience, get the information that interests them, and stay as long as they wish. Informality encourages participants who are intimidated by formal meetings to attend and give input; often the quality of responses is higher, but it only reaches the people wiling to attend. Effectively disseminates information, either at an early stage or prior to decision-making.</td>
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<td>Conferences</td>
<td>These allow for a focus on specific aspects of issues. Conferences can be &quot;kick-off&quot; events for a planning process or project development, or as a celebration of successful completion. Celebratory events reinforce the value of an inclusive planning process and give agencies an informal way to thank community members for their time and effort.</td>
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<td>Workshops and Retreats</td>
<td>These exercise are inherently participatory and encourage a “working together” atmosphere. Workshops are for smaller groups of people who want to participate intensively. Small groups allow a greater appreciation of others' views through opportunities for more extensive interaction. Retreats can &quot;clear the air&quot; on contentious issues, bringing disputants together to hear all sides of an issue and work out differences. The process of addressing difficult issues helps loosen adversarial relationships and creates the possibility for compromise and consensus.</td>
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<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>The goal of brainstorming is to generate as many solutions to a problems as possible. Listing every idea presented without comment or evaluation, grouping and evaluating ideas to reach consensus, and prioritizing ideas helps reduce conflict. Brainstorming heightens the awareness of community and sensitizes individuals to the behavior of the group and its participants. It helps mold participants into a working group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charrettes</td>
<td>This exercise operates within a specified time limit, during which participants work together intensely to reach a solution. Charrettes are problem oriented and produce specific, visible results. They are useful for enlarging the degree of public involvement in transportation, reducing feelings of alienation from government, and resolving an impasse.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>Visioning is useful for reviewing existing policy and setting new directions in policy. It involves a series of meetings focused on long-range issues and results in a long-range plan. It is democratic in its search for disparate opinions from all stakeholders and directly involves a cross-section of constituents. Visioning looks for common ground among participants in exploring and advocating strategies for the future, and uses an integrated approach to policy-making. It accounts for the relationship between issues, and how one problem's solution may generate other problems or have an impact on another level of government.</td>
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| Small Group Techniques | Participants (20 or less) meet as small gatherings or as break-outs of large meetings and offer many opportunities for creative, flexible interchange of ideas and lively, meaningful participation. **Structures:**  
  - Breakout groups  
  - Workshops  
  - Seminars  
  - Community juries  
  - Roundtables  
  - Study circles |

**Descriptions directly synthesized from:**

**For further reading on Charrettes, see:**
Elected Officials

Mayor Kenneth “Ken” Bradley
Commissioner Beth Dillaha
Mayor Kenneth “Kip” Marchman
Commissioner Tom McMacken
Mayor David Strong
Mayor Joseph “Joe” Terranova

...and three more, who wished to remain anonymous

Key Players

Anne Mooney; Editor-in-chief of Winter Park Voice
Peter “Pete” Weldon; Planning & Zoning Board Member

Fact Experts

Patrick Chapin; President of the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce
Dori Stone; Director of the Department of Planning and Community Development


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