

**Urban Nonprofits, City Governance, and
the Pursuit of Sustainability in American Cities**

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Prepared for Delivery at the 2009 Meetings of the American Political Science Association, Toronto,
Ontario, CA, September 3-7. Corresponding author: kent.portney@tufts.edu

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Abstract

American cities vary greatly in the degree to which they demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. Determining why some cities develop an array of programs designed to promote sustainability while others cities do little is a complex undertaking. We focus here on the interaction between various interest group sectors and city councilors. Our measurements draw on a combination of two databases, one a survey of 50 large American cities and the other a comprehensive index of city-level programming in the area of environmental protection and sustainability. Particular attention is paid to the role of urban nonprofits, including neighborhood associations, environmental groups, and non-environmental civic associations. Although the relationships are not consistent through all tests, there is an overall pattern that links nonprofit advocacy to increased levels of sustainability programs and policies. In a multivariate analysis labor union advocacy proves to be most powerful predictor of serious city-level sustainability efforts. This belies the image of labor as being anti-environmental. Our modern, post-industrial economy generates jobs with the development of green businesses. Overall, we find that city governments appear relatively open with a diverse array of advocacy groups participating in the policymaking process.

Urban Nonprofits, Governance, and the Pursuit of Sustainability in American Cities

Across the globe nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations have been extraordinarily important in the pursuit of sustainability. Many national and international nonprofit organizations have been instrumental in serving as catalyst and coordinator of efforts to promote sustainability and environmental protection in cities. By now, the success of large, national environmental groups (Shaiko, 1999; Berry, 1999) is well documented. And the role of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), through its Climate Change Programme, and its Local Agenda 21 and Local Action 21 programs, is clear. What is less well documented and understood is the role of local nonprofit organizations in promoting sustainability in specific cities and towns. A brief look at some specific cities that seem to excel in the pursuit of sustainability, such as Seattle and Portland, suggests that various kinds of nonprofit organizations are of paramount importance. Yet beyond a small number of case studies, there is surprisingly little empirical evidence to facilitate any sort of comprehensive understanding of whether, how, and in what ways local nonprofit organizations do, in fact, make a difference in the pursuit of sustainable cities. Many scholars have examined and even touted the importance of public participatory processes in devising sustainability programs, few explicitly discuss the organizational or group foundations of such participation (Selman and Parker, 1997; Agyeman and Evans, 1995)

This paper presents a preliminary exploration into the roles played by local nonprofits. It is preliminary in several senses. First, the information on which it is based is derived from a survey of public officials in only 50 of the largest U.S. cities. And even in these cities, the survey results reported here build an incomplete picture of the local nonprofit world. This is because we only report here on the responses from city councilors or commissioners, even though the full survey project will include responses from city administrators, and local nonprofit and other advocacy organization leaders. Second, it reports on some patterns of association without making any effort to understand the possible causal connections represented by these patterns. Instead, it seeks to determine whether there are some basic kinds of nonprofits that seem to operate in cities that are apparently more serious in their pursuit of sustainability compared to cities that are far less serious. It does not offer any compelling or definitive answers; it merely reports the patterns that exist. It does this with the hope of formulating

some hypotheses and expectations that can perhaps be examined with a more robust array of data when the full data collection project is completed.

Before delving into our statistical analysis of the roots of sustainability in U.S. cities, we offer some perspective and background in two areas. First, a brief overview of the landscape of nonprofit organizations in the U.S. will serve as the foundation for understanding local nonprofits and their potential role in sustainability, particularly the pursuit of sustainability as a matter of public policy by local governments. Although we tend to use the term “nonprofit” as though it refers to one specific kind of organization, in fact this is a misnomer. Nonprofit organizations, especially local nonprofit organizations, come in lots of different sizes and shapes. They exist for many different purposes, get their financing from many different sources, and serve many different constituencies. So we review some aspects of this landscape. Second, a brief discussion of what the local pursuit of sustainability seems to mean in the U.S. will demonstrate which cities actually seem to be working toward becoming more sustainable and what they are actually doing to accomplish this. This information will be used to lay the framework for understanding the patterns of local governance in the specific cities that were targeted for surveys.

The Landscape of Local Nonprofits

The term “nonprofit organization” is applied fairly broadly in common parlance, yet it has a specific legal meaning in the U.S. Formally, a nonprofit organization is a group that has been granted nonprofit status as a 501(c) organization under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. It is a status that allows the organization to operate without the burden of federal, state, or local taxation. The IRS formally groups nonprofits into 27 different categories (Salamon, 1999). Only one type of nonprofits, those organized under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code are allowed to offer tax deductibility to donors. Being able to offer tax deductibility is of enormous importance as it is a vital incentive to donors to give or to give more than they would if there were no tax break. In exchange for being able to receive tax-exempt contributions, 501(c)(3) nonprofits are prohibited from engaging in partisan politics. There are also restrictions on legislative lobbying, as 501(c)(3)s cannot engage in “substantial” amounts of legislative lobbying.¹ Since the IRS refuses to operationally define what “substantial” means, there is

¹ There are no restrictions on nonprofits in terms of the the amount of lobbying of administrative agencies.

widespread confusion among nonprofits as to what they are allowed to do. This confusion, in turn, causes some nonprofits to shy away from legislative lobbying altogether (Berry and Arons, 2003).

In this paper we use the term “nonprofits” to refer only to 501(c)(3)s. Although many other kinds of organizations, such as labor unions and business associations are tax-exempt nonprofits under other sections of 501(c), Americans do not think of them as nonprofits because they lack tax-deductible status. More to the point, we accept city councilors’ judgment—the people who filled out our questionnaires—as to what constitutes a nonprofit in their cities and what organizations fall outside of that designation. We’re confident that the colloquial language of urban politics closely follows the formal IRS designation of 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

Our expectation, our basic working hypothesis, is that cities with a more robust nonprofit sector, particularly a nonprofit sector with a healthy array of organizations dedicated to, or working on, issues related to the environment will be more likely to be willing able to pursue sustainability as a matter of local public policy. As discussed below, this expectation is built on a foundation developed in urban governance regime theory, which allows for an important role for the nonprofit sector in the governance of cities. It is also built on our earlier work, preliminary in nature and much smaller in scope, that shows that nonprofits play a surprisingly robust role in urban politics (Berry, Portney, Liss, Simoncelli, and Berger, 2006; Portney and Cuttler, 2006). Despite the lobbying restrictions on nonprofits, urban nonprofits prove to be vibrant and active advocates. Many are unconcerned about section 501(c)(3) and the ultimate penalty for exceeding the “substantial” threshold, revocation of tax-deductibility status, as they are small enough to fly under federal registration requirements and don’t raise enough to be required to file an informational tax return.

The Local Pursuit of Sustainability

Although U.S. cities would not be considered among the world leaders in the pursuit of local sustainability, by now there are at least 50 major cities with populations of 90,000 or greater that have adopted some form of sustainability policies. At its most basic level, sustainability is often defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987). The 50 cities that have sustainability programs vary considerably in terms of how aggressive they are – how many different programs they have adopted and how robust

those programs are – but they all share recognition that the pursuit of sustainability is a worthwhile goal. Moreover, if the focus is specifically on climate change, many more cities have created plans or programs to try to mitigate or adapt to the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, although there appears to be substantial variation in how comprehensive these plans are and how extensively these plans are implemented (Wheeler, 2008). Even among cities that have neither official sustainability nor climate change policies, there are many programs and initiatives that have been undertaken in an effort to become more sustainable.

For the purposes of this research, we distinguish cities that are more aggressive or more successful at becoming sustainable from others. Are there ways – standards and criteria – that can be used to make such distinctions? Can we make some judgments about which U.S. cities are more sustainable and which are less?

By now, there have been at least four major efforts reported to try to assess how sustainable U.S. cities are, or how aggressively they are pursuing sustainability as a matter of public policy. These include the SustainLane (2008) “U.S. City Sustainability” rankings, the Natural Resources Defense Council’s “Smarter Cities” (NRDC, 2009) index, *Popular Science* (2008) magazine’s “50 Greenest Cities” rankings, and Portney’s “Taking Sustainable Cities Seriously” rankings (Portney, 2003, 2009). Each of these ratings is based on its own set of criteria and its own unique scoring system. The *Popular Science* rankings appear to be the least helpful, incorporating assessments of only four criteria: electricity sources; transportation; “green living;” and recycling and “green perspective.” Moreover, these assessments were applied to a group of 50 cities where it is not clear on what basis these cities were selected. The NRDC’s rankings appear more robust, focusing on nine specific criteria, including: air quality; energy production and conservation; environmental standards and participation; green building; green space; recycling; transportation; standard of living; and water quality and conservation. The NRDC rankings are applied to 67 “large cities,” including the 50 largest cities with the unexplained omission of San Antonio. Separate rankings are provided for smaller cities.

The SustainLane rankings are based on 16 criteria: air quality; commute times; city innovations; energy and climate change; green building; housing affordability; knowledge and communications; local food and agriculture; metro street congestion; metro public transit ridership;

natural disaster risk; planning and land use; tap water quality; waste management; and water supply. These SustainLane rankings are applied to a group of cities whose selection criteria are not clear specified, although they include the 50 largest cities except Raleigh, Santa Ana, St. Louis, Tampa, and Wichita. All three of these rankings represent a composite measure of both results (such as how clean is the water and air) as well as local and regional policies (such as land use regulation or recycling programs, to name a few). As such, higher ranked cities may not be trying very hard to become more sustainable. Indeed, they may be able to benefit from the efforts of other cities. For this reason, Portney's ranking focuses exclusively on what cities are doing as a matter of local public policies and programs to try to become more sustainable. What distinguishes Portney's rankings (discussed in more detail below) from the others is that they are based only on the cities that have articulated the broad goal of trying to become more sustainable through an executive order, a resolution of city council, an explicit theme of a comprehensive or general plan, or the existence of an explicit sustainability plan. Since the ultimate purpose of the research that is partially reported here is to understand the linkage between aspects of cities' governance and their public policies in pursuit of sustainability, we will rely on Portney's assessment of large U.S. cities.

What kinds of policies and programs have these cities adopted in their pursuit of sustainability? Portney's Index focuses on 35 different local programs conceptually falling into seven broad categories. It is not possible here to explain them all adequately, but by way of overview here are the categories and the specific programs:

- * "Smart growth" programs, includes eco-industrial park development, targeted or cluster economic development, eco-village (urban infill housing) projects or programs, and brownfield redevelopment projects.
- * Land use planning and zoning policies and programs includes the use of zoning to delineate environmentally sensitive growth areas, comprehensive land use planning that incorporates environmental protection, and especially in cities that do not have zoning authority, the use of tax incentives for environmentally friendly development.
- * Transportation planning and policies, including mass transit, limits on downtown parking spaces, high-occupancy vehicle lanes on city streets, alternatively fueled city vehicle ("green fleet") programs, and bicycle ridership programs.
- * Pollution prevention and reduction, including solid and hazardous waste recycling, air emissions reduction programs (VOC reduction or climate change programs), recycled product

purchasing by city government, hazardous waste site remediation, asbestos abatement, lead paint abatement, and pesticide reduction programs.

* Energy and resource conservation, including green building and green affordable housing programs, renewable energy use by city government, residential energy conservation programs (independent of green building), alternative energy (biofuels, windpower, solar, hydroelectric) offered to consumers, and water conservation efforts.

* Sustainable (livability) indicators projects that have been actively utilized in the last five years, including a progress report being issued within the last five years, and a clear action plan.

* Administrative, organizational, and managerial coordination of the environmental protection function. This grouping includes whether there is a single government or nonprofit agency responsible for implementing sustainability programs, whether sustainability is an explicit part of a citywide comprehensive plan, whether there is involvement of a city/county/metropolitan council, whether there is involvement of the mayor or chief executive officer, whether there is involvement of the business community, and whether the general public is involved (through public hearings, visioning process, or neighborhood associations).

As operationalized the exact content of cities’ sustainability programs and policies is less important than the mere existence of a sustainability policy in the first place. Table 1 provides a list of the 47 cities studied here, showing the name of the city’s sustainability program (if any), and its relative Portney Index score compared to other cities with sustainability programs. The Index score simply reflects how many of the 35 specific programs each city has adopted and implemented.

This Index does not rate how nonprofits contributed to the level of sustainability programs found in these cities. Instead, the Index focuses is on what cities are doing in their public policies and programs to try to become more sustainable. As discussed in more detail below, we make the distinction between cities where sustainability is truly on the local public agenda and cities where there is little evidence that sustainability is a high priority. Of course, not all cities where sustainability is a high priority can be said to have yet achieved anything close to sustainability.

Table 1: Sustainability Policies and Programs in 47 of the Largest 54 Cities in the US

City	Name of Sustainability Program/Policy	Sustainability Index Score
Albuquerque	Comprehensive Plan/Sustainable Albuquerque	29
Atlanta	Comprehensive Development Plan	14

Austin	Sustainable Communities Initiative	19
Baltimore	Plan Baltimore	17
Boston	Sustainable Boston Initiative	17
Cleveland	Sustainable Cleveland Partnership	14
Columbus	Get Green Columbus	25
Denver	Denver Comprehensive Plan/Greenprint Denver	32
Honolulu	Sustainable Honolulu	24
Indianapolis	Greenprint Indianapolis	11
Jacksonville	Jacksonville Indicators Project	15
Kansas City	Metro Kansas City Outlook	23
Milwaukee	Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee	9
Minneapolis	The Sustainability Plan/Greenprint Minneapolis	29
Oakland	Oakland Sustainability Program	28
Philadelphia	Sustainable Philadelphia/Greenworks Philadelphia	22
Phoenix	Comprehensive Plan, Environmental Element	16
Portland	Comprehensive Plan	26
San Diego	Sustainable Community Plan/City of Villages Plan	26
San Francisco	The Sustainability Plan	24
San Jose	Sustainable City Program	27
Seattle	Toward a Sustainable Seattle Comprehensive Plan	34
St. Louis	Sustainable Neighborhood Program	13
Tampa	Tampa-Hillsborough County Sustainable Cities	19
Tucson	Livable Tucson Vision Program	18
Washington, D.C.	Sustainable Washington Alliance	19
Arlington TX	None	-----
Charlotte	None	-----
Colorado Springs	None	-----
Dallas	None	-----
Detroit	None	-----
El Paso	None	-----
Forth Worth	None	-----
Fresno	None	-----
Las Vegas	None	-----
Long Beach	None	-----
Louisville	None	-----
Memphis	None	-----
Mesa	None	-----
Nashville	None	-----
Oklahoma City	None	-----
Omaha	None	-----
Raleigh	None	-----
San Antonio	None	-----
Tulsa	None	-----
Virginia Beach	None	-----
Wichita	None	-----

The Local Politics of Sustainability

This investigation into the role of local nonprofit organizations is as much about the local political landscape as it is about the organizations themselves. In at least one sense, it is about whether and in what ways nonprofits operate to help influence local policymaking. In the parlance of political science, it is about whether and in what ways such organizations become part of the urban governance regime (Stone, 1993). Are nonprofits an integral part of the urban governing coalition, or are they largely outside of this coalition? Are local nonprofits, particularly those that support sustainability, able to get their issues on the local public agenda? With the apparent proliferation of local nonprofit organizations promoting activities and actions on the environment, climate change, and sustainability, are cities experiencing the evolution of a new type of local governance regime? Do cities that have more robust nonprofit sectors demonstrate a greater likelihood of being willing to pursue sustainability as a matter of public policy? What of other parts of the interest group community—is there a relationship between the level of sustainability and the strength of other sectors? Does a strong business sector portend a weak commitment to sustainability? Or is the association a positive one? These are the kinds of questions that animate this analysis.

Questions about the link between cities' governance and their pursuit of sustainability, smart growth, and climate protection have received significant recent attention by scholars. For example, analysis by Lubell, Feiock, and del la Cruz (2009) links the formal structure of city governance institutions in Florida, especially city councils, to the kind of urban growth policies cities adopt. Another line of inquiry has focused on the broad character of local governance regimes and their link to sustainability and climate change policies. Particularly building on Stone's (1993: 19-20) argument that "middle-class progressive" governance regimes are characterized as both being willing to pursue environmental protection policies and having a unique set of governance characteristics, scholars have begun to examine whether municipalities that try to protect the environment are governed differently. What are the characteristics of cities' government regimes where sustainability, and environmental and climate protection, policies are adopted and implemented? Do such regimes allow greater influence from some kinds of groups (such as nonprofit organizations) and less influence from others (such as pro-development interests)? As Gibbs and Jonas (2000: 300) note, "local environmental initiatives these days involve a wide range of local organizations, including local governments, business organizations, environmental groups, community organizations, and other local 'stakeholders'." Other

governance characteristics, such as levels and types of public participation (discussed below) have also been suggested as important influences on local willingness to take on sustainability and environmental protection as a matter of public policy.

The specific role of the nonprofit sector in promoting and influencing local sustainability policies has not been studied in much depth. Certainly, the case study research suggests that in cities that were early out of the gate in pursuing sustainability clearly had important nonprofit groups spearheading the effort. In Seattle, for example, a city that started its pursuit of sustainability as a matter of public policy by the early 1990s, the nonprofit group “Sustainable Seattle” played an important if not pivotal role through its efforts to crystallize a public voice around its “sustainable indicators” initiative. Eventually that effort was incorporated into the city’s comprehensive plan, “Toward a Sustainable Seattle.” In a pilot study in 2006, Portney and Cuttler (2006) studied 14 U.S. cities with populations between, 400,000 and 650,000. this study involved a survey of city councilors and city administrators to find out how much contact city officials had with the nonprofit community. What they found was a strong tendency for cities with more aggressive sustainability programs to have local officials who interacted far more with nonprofit groups. The nonprofit sector seems better developed, especially with regard to how frequently policy makers interact with the sector. There is also a greater likelihood that the nonprofit sector will include at least one homegrown group that supports and advocates for sustainability or for the environment in some fashion. And when such groups exist in cities, there is a strong tendency for traditional views of economic development – the view that any kind of development is good development – to be displaced by a more ecologically or environmentally constrained view of economic development.

Many arguments have been put forth to support the idea that widespread participation of the residents of communities represents an important, even essential, element in the successful pursuit of sustainability (Weber, 2003; Baber and Bartlett, 2005; Costanza, Daly, and Prugh, 2000). Yet there is much less discussion of the ways that mediating organizations, especially those organizations that might be said to produce “bridging social capital” between residents and their local government leaders, can and do operate in the broader context of the local political process. How do mediating institutions aggregate and articulate to policymakers the collective voices of many residents who share an interest in sustainability?

Another line of inquiry examines the need for multi-level governance specifically in pursuit of climate protection. (Betsill and Rabe, 2009; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2006; Bulkeley and Betsill, 2003; Rabe, 2008) Feiock, Tavares and Kang (2007) suggest that the mere presence of multi-level governance arrangements dedicated to growth management exercises great influence over municipalities' willingness to engage in smart growth policies. Of course, the underlying idea is that no single government, especially municipal government, has the authority, capacity, or political will to affect emissions of greenhouse gases or other environmental impacts. In order to make significant reductions, efforts of state, regional, and local planning and policies are required. In the absence of such multi-level governance, municipalities will inevitably find their own sustainability policies overwhelmed by polluting behavior of people and places over which they have no ability change. Such externalities require policy and planning at higher levels, so the argument goes. This analysis will not offer definitive answers on these issues. It will, however, provide some basic evidence to begin investigating them.

Survey Methods

The data on which this analysis is based come from a 2009 survey of local officials in 50 of the largest 54 cities in the U.S. The four largest cities, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston, were excluded from the survey because the challenges presented by their scale. The 50 surveyed cities have 2007 population sizes ranging from 1.5 million in Phoenix to 336,000 in Tampa. In other words, these cities represent the entire universe of U.S. cities in this population range. Between June and August of 2009, questionnaires were mailed to all city councilors or commissioners in these cities. Analysis here focuses on the results of those councilors who responded to the survey. Overall, questionnaires were mailed to the entire population of 541 councilors,² and 162 responded for a response rate of 30%.³ These 162 respondents represent 47 cities.⁴ The project also involved identifying and surveying an average of 18 city administrators in each city, and 25 leaders of local advocacy groups, although the data from these latter populations is not yet available for analysis.

² Initially, 549 questionnaires were mailed, and eight of the recipients were later determined to no longer be city councilors. For the purposes of computing the response rate, these eight recipients were removed from the denominator for a response rate of $162/541 = 30\%$. We use the generic term "councilor" here, although some cities may refer to their representatives as Aldermen (as in Milwaukee), Supervisors (as in San Francisco), or Commissioners (as in Portland).

³ The City of Columbus, OH, has an ethics ordinance that apparently prohibits public officials from responding to solicitations including surveys. We did, however, receive a small number of responses from Columbus councilors.

⁴ As of August 12, pending a second follow-up reminder, three of the 50 cities surveyed had response rates of 0%, and were not included in this analysis: Miami, Sacramento, and Santa Ana.

This project developed a mixed-mode survey methodology. City councilors' mailing and email addresses were collected from each city's respective web site. Councilors were mailed a paper questionnaire, along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey (shown in Appendix 1), and offering respondents the opportunity to win one of three \$100 gift cards from Amazon.com. Also included were a pre-paid (stamped) postcard allowing the councilor to provide his/her name and to be entered into the gift card raffle, and a pre-paid (stamped) envelope to allow respondents to return the completed questionnaire in the mail. This mailing also included a new \$1 bill, which Dillman (2009: 238-242) suggests exerts significant influence on the response rate. The paper questionnaire offered councilors the option of doing the survey on the web, and a URL was displayed in the event the councilor preferred this means for responding. After about 17 business days, those who had not returned the pre-paid postcard were sent a personalized email reminder which included a link to the online questionnaire. The survey yielded 116 responses on paper and 46 responses online.⁵ Appendix 2 presents a copy of the questionnaire that was sent to city councilors.

Key Questions and Issues

Here we focus on two key questions related to the role of local nonprofits and other advocacy organizations and the pursuit of sustainability. We turn first to measurements of levels of interaction between advocacy groups and city councilors. Then we link such interaction to the level of commitment by cities to sustainability. We build this analysis around a number of different variables associated with advocacy groups in each city, and try to see how closely related these variables are to the pursuit of sustainability. We begin with a series of cross-tabulations and then move to a multivariate analysis designed to sort out the explanatory power of the many variables we include. Most broadly, though, we try to determine if “sustainable cities” such as Seattle, Denver, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Boston, Atlanta, and Sacramento, look different with respect to their advocacy communities than those in comparison cities like Memphis, Las Vegas, El Paso, Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, and Charlotte.

⁵ Legislators of all types are a particularly difficult cohort to survey as they are concerned about creating a paper trail of issue stands—positions they may not want to be held to in the future. Even though subjects were told that responses would be held in confidence, it is difficult to overcome such suspicions. A thirty percent response rate is quite respectable for this group.

Group Interactions with City Leaders

If local nonprofits serve as effective voices in support of the pursuit of sustainability, then one way this voice can be heard is through contacting local officials for the purpose of expressing their views. Extensive urban politics literature certainly makes clear that the private sector – leaders of local business and industry as well as representative groups – are not shy about making their views known to local officials. What isn't clear is whether local nonprofits can be equally vocal, and whether when they are vocal, they can have some influence affecting the kinds of policies and programs adopted by their cities. In order to investigate this, the questionnaire asked each surveyed city councilor to report on their contacts with all types of advocacy groups. Specifically, question 12 asked:

12. In the course of doing your job, you come into contact with representatives of many different kinds of nongovernmental organizations. Thinking back over the past month or so, which of these sectors did you have the most contact with? By "contact" we mean telephone calls, meetings in your office, and meetings out in the community or in workplaces. *Please check one.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business associations | <input type="checkbox"/> Church or faith-based |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Labor unions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit other than environmental | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood associations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specific corporations/businesses | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

This represents a rather severe test in the sense that the temptation for city councilors might be to check nearly all types of groups. By asking councilors to choose the one type of group they have had the most contact with, we push them to reveal which type is most salient to them. At least that's what we had in mind. Unfortunately, a significant number of respondents checked more than one sector. (For reasons that are unclear, this is the only question where some respondents didn't follow directions.) Thus, we have coded a sector as being one characterized by high contact with councilors whether they were designated as either the only sector or one of multiple sectors that were checked off (usually no more than three).

Note that the array of groups presented to respondents actually lists three types of nonprofits: neighborhood associations, environmental groups, and non-environmental nonprofits. Also included are two business categories, associations (like the local Chamber of Commerce or developers' organizations), as well as labor unions and faith-based groups.

Rather than relying on the answers to this question alone, the survey also asked councilors which types of groups are usually included in discussions over policy issues. Question 15 asked:

15. Which of these sectors are most likely to be included in informal bargaining and negotiation with city officials? On issues involving both economic development and environmental concerns, what is the likelihood that you and your colleagues would include these sectors in your policymaking deliberations?

	<i>Very Likely To Include</i>	<i>Maybe/ Maybe Not</i>	<i>Not Very Likely To Include</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Business associations	—	—	—	—
Environmental groups	—	—	—	—
Nonprofit other than environmental	—	—	—	—
Church or faith-based	—	—	—	—
Specific corporations /businesses	—	—	—	—
Labor unions	—	—	—	—
Neighborhood associations	—	—	—	—

Table 2 shows the basic results of these questions. On the left side of Table 2 we can see that city councilors report having the greatest level of contact with neighborhood associations, followed by business associations, non-environmental nonprofit organizations, specific businesses or corporations, labor unions, environmental groups, and church or faith-based organizations. What is abundantly clear from this data is that the barriers to entry for advocacy organizations is quite low. If your group wants to see the city councilor, she's available. For city government the old saw that "all politics is local" seems to point to the importance of neighborhoods. Most city councilors are elected by district and the limited populations of neighborhoods means that a councilor's ongoing interaction with citizens and groups within the neighborhood can build an insurmountable wall for would-be challengers in the next election. This low barrier to entry also emerged in an earlier study we did based on in-person interviews with city councilors, administrators, and advocates in eight Massachusetts cities. This low barrier to entry is part of the structure of city politics that it make it quite distinct from interest group politics at the state and national level (Berry, Portney, Liss, Simoncelli, and Berger, 2006; Berry, forthcoming). Access is not influence and we should not assume that just because the door is open, acting on lobbying requests automatically follows. Still, interest group scholars regard access as important as it's the first step for advocates who hope to shape policy. Clearly, neighborhood nonprofits are active and city councilors are sensitive to what's on their minds.

There are some modest differences when we turn from contact to what’s likely to be a more important form of access: who’s at the bargaining table. Again, neighborhood nonprofits do exceptionally well. Only 2 percent of city councilors say neighborhood associations are unlikely to be at the bargaining table on either environmental or economic development matters. With the exception of faith-based groups, all other sectors appear to do reasonably well. Business associations score strikingly higher on the bargaining table question, with double the number (67 percent) “very likely” to be included at the bargaining table than the proportion (33 percent) that city councilors report a high rate of contact with. A reasonable inference is that business associations don’t need to push to see councilors and that they’re called upon by city officials when they begin to talk with stakeholders.

Table 2: City Councilors Reports of Contacts with Groups, and Inclusion of Groups in Policy Discussions

		% of councilors reporting inclusion of group in discussions about economic development and environment			N = 161
Type of Group	% of councilors reporting high contact	Very likely to include	May/Maybe not include	Not very likely to include	Totals
Neighborhood associations	56.5%	58.6%	29.6	1.8	100.0%
Business associations	32.9%	67.0%	26.9	5.1	100.0%
Non-environmental nonprofit organizations	28.6%	34.0%	51.0	15.1	100.0%
Specific businesses	16.8%	42.7%	48.0	9.3	100.0%
Labor unions	16.8%	44.2%	34.4	21.4	100.0%
Environmental groups	10.6%	43.2%	38.7	18.1	100.0%
Church/faith based organizations	9.3%	16.7%	47.3	36.0	100.0%

Support for the Environment and Sustainability

While the contacting information and involvement provide a sense of whom city councilors interact with, it does not provide direct insight into the role of different kinds of organizations in

helping to create political support for the pursuit of sustainability. In order to understand this, we asked councilors two questions using a five-point Likert scale to provide us with a sense of how strong their respective city's commitment to the environment and to sustainability is.

6. Cities also vary considerably in their commitment to environmental protection. In your own estimation, how would you evaluate your local government's commitment to improving the natural environment of the city?

Level of commitment to environmental protection

None	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
1	2	3	4	5

7. We want to turn to another question about the environment, specifically *sustainability* and your city's level of commitment to balancing environmental degradation with environmental protection and improvement. Advocates of sustainability argue that we should meet the development needs of today's cities without compromising the needs of future generations. Thinking about all of the policies, programs, and initiatives of city government, how committed would you say your city is to this idea of sustainability?

Level of commitment to sustainability

None	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
1	2	3	4	5

Do councilors in cities with greater contacts with particular kinds of advocacy group serve in governments with greater commitment to the environment and sustainability? By cross-tabulating the contact questions with reports of levels of commitment to the environment and to sustainability, we can begin to see the extent to which contact with different kinds of nonprofits seems to play a role in creating the political will.

Table 3 shows that there does not seem to be a connection between the type of group the councilor has high contact with and the level of commitment of the city to environmental protection. The only type of group connection that stands out at all is business associations. Nearly three-quarters of the city councilors who report having the most contact with business associations report that their respective cities have a high or very high commitment to environmental protection. But around two

thirds of the councilors who report most contact with other kinds of groups also report a high or very high commitment. Certainly, there is nothing in Table 3 to suggest that councilors who are most in contact with neighborhood associations, environmental groups or non-environmental nonprofit groups serve in cities with greater commitments to the environment.

Table 3: Relationship Between Councilors’ Group Contacts and City Commitment to Environmental Protection

Type of Group With High Contact	% of councilors reporting city commitment to environmental protection			Totals
	High, very high commitment	Moderate commitment	Low, very low commitment	
Neighborhood associations	60.4%	28.6	11.0	100.0%
Business associations	73.6%	17.0	9.4	100.0%*
Non-environmental nonprofit organizations	63.0%	28.3	8.7	100.0%
Specific businesses	59.3%	37.0	3.7	100.0%
Labor unions	63.0%	22.2	14.8	100.0%
Environmental groups	64.7%	23.5	11.8	100.0%
Church/faith based organizations	66.7%	26.7	6.7	100.0%

* chi-square test of difference between councilors who have most contact with business associations and those who do not is significant at .05 level.

If there is no evidence that direct contact with environmental and nonprofit organizations is associated with higher commitment to environmental protection, then perhaps inclusion of such groups in discussions about economic development and environmental programs and policies would be. Table 4 looks at the relationship between inclusion of such groups in policy discussions and cities’ level of commitment to environmental protection. Here we see that three-quarters of the councilors who report that environmental groups would “very likely” be included in discussions of economic development and environmental issues also report that their cities are “highly” or “very highly” committed to

environmental protection. This percent is certainly greater than that for other kinds of groups, perhaps suggesting that indeed environmental groups are able to exert some influence.

Table 4: Relationship Between Group Inclusion and City Commitment to Environment (Cell entries represent % of councilors who report group “very likely” to be included in discussions of economic development and environmental issues)

Type of Group Included	% of councilors reporting city commitment to environmental protection			Totals
	High, very high commitment	Moderate commitment	Low, very low commitment	
Neighborhood associations	66.3%	25.8	7.9	100.0%
Business associations	63.2%	23.6	13.2	100.0%*
Non-environmental nonprofit organizations	63.5%	28.8	7.7	100.0%
Specific businesses	54.7%	31.3	14.1	100.0%
Labor unions	58.8%	33.8	7.4	100.0%*
Environmental groups	76.1%	20.9	3.0	100.0%*
Church/faith based organizations	68.0%	24.0	8.0	100.0%

* Chi-square test of difference between level of commitment and level of inclusion of business associations, labor unions, and environmental groups is significant at .05 level or beyond

What about commitment to sustainability? Table 5 looks at the same patterns of group contacts and as found in Table 3 substituting “commitment to sustainability” for “commitment to environmental protection.” Although one might expect these two questions to tap the same underlying issues, indeed answers to them are not terribly closely correlated.⁶ For this reason, we report the results separately. Here we see that environmental group contacts are significantly different where there is a high or very high commitment to sustainability. Church or faith-based group contacts are very prevalent where

⁶ The Pearson correlation between the original Likert scales measuring commitment to environmental protection and commitment to sustainability is .63 across all councilors; Kendall’s Tau(b) is .58.

there is high or very high commitment to sustainability, but due to the relatively few contacts with churches or faith-based organizations (only 9% of councilors reported contacts with churches most often), this difference is not significant. This table does seem to suggest that councilors who report most frequent contacts with environmental groups are more likely in cities with high or very high commitment to sustainability.

Table 5: Relationship Between Councilors’ Group Contacts and City Commitment to Sustainability

Type of Group Contact	% of councilors reporting city commitment to sustainability			N = 161 Totals
	High, very high commitment	Moderate commitment	Low, very low commitment	
Neighborhood associations	68.1%	22.0	9.9	100.0%
Business associations	73.6%	18.9	7.5	100.0%
Non-environmental nonprofit organizations	65.2%	28.3	6.5	100.0%
Specific businesses	74.1%	18.5	7.4	100.0%
Labor unions	63.0%	22.2	14.8	100.0%
Environmental groups	76.5%	0.0	23.5	100.0%*
Church/faith based organizations	93.3%	6.7	0.0	100.0%

* Chi-square test of difference between level of commitment to sustainability and contact with environmental groups is significant at .05 level or beyond

Table 6, mirroring Table 4 but focused on commitment to sustainability, points to environmental and non-environmental nonprofit organizations. Over 80% of the city councilors who report that these kinds of groups would be “very likely” to be included in discussions of economic develop and the environment also report that the level of commitment to sustainability in their respective cities is “high” or “very high.” Only “inclusion of environmental groups” produces a statistically significant difference. Consistent with the findings in Table 4, this suggests that

environmental group activities may well have something to do with cities’ commitment to the pursuit of sustainability.

Table 6: Relationship Between Group Inclusion and City Commitment to Sustainability (Cell entries represent % of councilors who report group “very likely” to be included in discussions of economic development and environmental issues)

Type of Group Included	% of councilors reporting city commitment to sustainability			Totals
	High, very high commitment	Moderate commitment	Low, very low commitment	
Neighborhood associations	75.3%	16.9	7.8	100.0%
Business associations	70.8%	18.9	10.4	100.0%
Non-environmental nonprofit organizations	82.7%	13.5	3.8	100.0%
Specific businesses	65.6%	18.8	15.6	100.0%
Labor Unions	72.1%	19.1	8.8	100.0%
Environmental Groups	80.6%	16.4	3.0	100.0%*
Church/faith based organizations	76.0%	16.0	8.0	100.0%

* Chi-square test of difference between level of commitment to sustainability and inclusion of environmental groups in discussions is significant at .05 level or beyond

Taking tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 together, a strong, overall pattern emerges. These self-reported measures of access by city councilors reflects a relatively open policymaking system where advocacy groups are welcome and where many are included in the ongoing bargaining that characterizes public policymaking. Since city councilors, more than other local officials, may want to communicate that they’re open to all interest group sectors, we cannot rely on these data alone. Our surveys of administrators and advocacy leaders in the same 50 cities are currently in the field but when this data becomes available we will be able to confirm or disconfirm these preliminary findings.

A second finding that stands out is the high level of activity by nonprofits. Neighborhood associations, environmental groups, and other types of nonprofit civic associations, are deeply embedded in the political fabric of the city. Generally lacking a direct material interest in sustainability policies, one might expect that the collective action problem would cripple such groups.⁷ For this reason interest group scholars, primarily influenced by patterns found at the national level, have not placed much emphasis on advocacy by such organizations. An exception would be national environmental lobbies, which have gained great respect for their persistent and effective Washington lobbying.

City Commitment to Sustainability

Tables 3 through 6 do not take advantage of what we know about cities' actual level of commitment to sustainability. It may seem reasonable to assume that councilors in cities with sustainability programs would report a strong commitment to sustainability, and that tends to be true. Yet among councilors in cities without any formal sustainability program, large numbers still report strong commitment. Although not shown in a table, 42.5% of city councilors from cities with no formal sustainability program or plan report their cities have "high commitment" to sustainability, and another 17.8% report "very high commitment" to sustainability. This, of course, makes one wonder what these councilors might take as evidence of their perceived commitment. More to the point here, it raises the issue of whether councilors' group contacts and the inclusion of various kinds of groups in discussions about economic development and environmental protection might be different in cities with sustainability programs than in cities without such programs.⁸ Tables 7 and 8 investigate this.

The comparison in Table 7 demonstrates that cities with sustainability programs have greater levels of high contact with advocacy groups. The differences are most striking for non-environmental nonprofits and labor unions. The nonprofits' differential is statistically significant while the large difference for labor unions, with a small "n", doesn't quite reach the significance threshold. Given the

⁷ Unlike citywide environmental or civic associations, neighborhood associations might have a direct material interest in policies that resulted in making their neighborhoods more appealing, thus raising home values.

⁸ The cities of Albuquerque, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Columbus, Denver, Honolulu, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Oakland, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, St. Louis, Tampa, Tucson, and Washington, D.C. have sustainability programs. The other 23 cities do not. See Table 1 for details.

high level of activism by all types of nonprofits, it's easy to conclude that advocacy by these typically liberal groups have had some success in pushing the cities with real programs.

To try to build a stronger case for this interpretation, we repeated this exercise by substituting bargaining inclusion for high contact. The pattern in Table 8 is close to identical, adding to our confidence to our belief that robust sustainability efforts have some link to advocacy by liberal groups.

Table 7: Relationship Between Councilors' Group Contacts and Cities' Pursuit of Sustainability

	Does city have a formal sustainability program or policy?		N = 161
Type of Group Most Contact	City has sustainability program	City has no sustainability program	Totals
Neighborhood associations	54.9%	45.1	100.0%
Business associations	50.9%	49.1	100.0%
Non-environmental nonprofit organizations	65.2%	34.8	100.0%*
Specific businesses	55.6%	44.4	100.0%
Labor unions	63.0%	37.0	100.0%
Environmental groups	52.9%	47.1	100.0%
Church/faith based organizations	46.7%	53.3	100.0%

* Chi-square test of difference between existence of sustainability program and contact with environmental groups is significant at .05 level or beyond

This time labor unions do achieve statistical significance, as do non-environmental nonprofits. Although neighborhood associations and environmental groups fall short of statistical significance, the differentials are in the right direction. Business is more of a mixed bag and we'll analyze the relationship of business to sustainability efforts in more detail below.

Sorting out the Differences

The cross-tabulations provide a foundation for understanding basic patterns of connection between group contacts, group inclusion in policy discussions, and the existence of sustainability programs. They also raise many other questions, particularly with respect to spurious influences. For example, would the differences in councilors' contacts with non-environmental nonprofit organizations or labor unions persist even if other city characteristics were controlled? Perhaps, for example, cities

Table 8: Relationship Between Group Inclusion and Cities' Pursuit of Sustainability

	Does city have a formal sustainability program or policy?		N = 161
Type of Group Included	City has sustainability program	City has no sustainability program	Totals
Neighborhood associations	53.9%	46.1	100.0%
Business associations	48.1%	51.9	100.0%
Non-environmental nonprofit organizations	65.4%	34.6	100.0%*
Specific businesses	54.7%	45.3	100.0%
Labor unions	70.6%	29.4	100.0%*
Environmental groups	56.7%	43.3	100.0%
Church/faith based organizations	56.0%	44.0	100.0%

*Chi-square test of difference between existence of sustainability program and inclusion of nonprofit organizations and labor unions in discussions is significant at .05 level or beyond

that have sustainability programs and cities that include labor unions in their policy discussions are simply more liberal in their dominant political ideology than cities that have not sustainability programs. Obviously, addressing these issues requires some form of multivariate analysis. In order to look at these relationships more closely, we define a simple regression model that looks separately at the three dependent variables. We use the "commitment to environmental protection" question and the

“commitment to sustainability” question, each measured as a five-point Likert scale. The third dependent variable is dichotomous, measuring whether or not the city has a formal sustainability program. (See Table 1 and footnote 7 for a list of cities that have sustainability programs)

Independent variables included in the analysis measure the level of inclusion of neighborhood associations, labor unions, business associations, environmental groups, and non-environmental nonprofit organizations, as reflected in Question 15. These three-category variables measure whether each group would be “very likely” included, “maybe/maybe not” included, or “not very likely” included in discussions about economic development and environmental program issues.⁹ The variables are included in a effort to see which seem to be most closely related to commitment to environmental protection and sustainability.

Also included in the regression analyses are variables that measure two aspects of the policy making environment in the city. The first focuses on the city’s commitment to promoting the private sector as a means for achieving economic development. We rely on Question 4 which taps the importance of private economic development in the city. Specifically, Question 4 asked:

4. In every city there’s always a lot of discussion about its economic climate. We know that cities differ considerably in the degree to which the city government tries to actively promote the growth and prosperity of the private sector. *On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating a strong commitment to promoting the private sector, and 1 indicating virtually no commitment to promoting the private sector, how would you rate your own city government? Please circle:*

Level of commitment to promoting the private sector

<u>None</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Very High</u>
1	2	3	4	5

The inference should be clear: a high commitment to promoting the private sector on this five-point scale represents less of a commitment to achieving some sort of balance that is normally understood to be required in environmental protection and the pursuit of sustainability.

⁹ “Very likely included” was coded “3”; “Maybe/maybe not” was coded “2”; and “Not very likely included” was coded “1”.

The second aspect focuses on the specific trade-off between economic development and the environment, as measured in Question 8. Specifically, this question asked:

8. It's sometimes the case that economic development and environmental protection come into conflict. Although each issue is unique in its own way, if you were to make a generalization about how city officials choose between competing visions of what is best for the city, how would you rate your local government? *Please check the statement that comes closest to describing your city:*

1. Strongly favors economic development
2. Economic development somewhat more a priority
3. Equal balance between economic development and environmental protection
4. Environmental protection somewhat more a priority
5. Strongly favors environmental protection

This five-point scale measures the extent of the local policy mindset in favor of economic development (lower values) or environmental protection (higher values).

In an effort to measure another potential spurious influence, we included a measure of councilors' level of concern about environmental problems:

11. For each of these environmental problems, please indicate if you personally worry about it a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all.

	<i>4.Great Deal</i>	<i>3.Fair Amount</i>	<i>2.Only A little</i>	<i>1.Not At all</i>
Pollution of drinking water	—	—	—	—
Pollution of rivers, lakes and reservoirs	—	—	—	—
Contamination of soil and water by toxic waste	—	—	—	—
Air pollution	—	—	—	—
The “greenhouse effect” or global warming	—	—	—	—

Our analysis only included the response to the question about “contamination of soil and water by toxic waste” where higher values indicate greater concern and lower value indicate lesser concern.

The final independent variable represents a more direct effort to measure the dominant political ideology of the city. In order to tap this, we asked city councilors:

16. How would you describe the political views of those who work for city government? Are they predominantly liberal? Conservative? Moderate? On a scale where 1 indicates very liberal political views, 4 represents a middle point or moderate position, and 7 represents very conservative political views, where would you place the following:

	<i>Please Circle</i>						
	Very Liberal	2	Moderate	5	6	Very Conservative	7
Most administrators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most city councilors/ commissioners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The Mayor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Yourself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

We created an average index across all four questions by adding the responses and dividing by 4. Higher values represent more conservative places and lower values represent more liberal places, as reported by city councilors.

Table 9 shows the results of three separate OLS regression analyses. In a fairly robust model explaining about a third of the variation in “commitment to environmental protection,” five variables (highlighted) emerge as significant. Most importantly here, inclusion of both environmental groups and labor organizations seems to be related to commitment to environmental protection, even controlling for measures of the city’s policy mindset and ideology. The model explaining “commitment to sustainability” is somewhat less robust, and suggests that, among the various types of groups, only inclusion of labor organizations differentiates cities’ level of commitment. Finally, the model explaining the existence of formal sustainability programs points to two kinds of groups – business associations and labor unions. Of course, the results suggest that councilors report that business associations are less likely to be included in economic development and environment policy discussions in cities with sustainability programs. Labor organizations, on the other hand, are more likely involved in cities with sustainability programs, even controlling for the dominant political ideology.

Advocacy Groups and Sustainability

The analysis here has only begun to scratch the surface of an issue concerning the relationship between the fabric of the nonprofit sector in cities and the willingness of local government and political leaders to pursue long-term sustainability goals. This is fundamentally a political issue, going to the heart of how and why cities are governed the way they are. In this case, the underlying issue is whether the local nonprofit sector has the ability to represent interests that support local sustainability, and if so, whether that sector offers an effective counterbalance to alternative views about economic development and local public policy.

The evidence here, while preliminary and well short of definitive, does lend support to the notion that sustainable cities – cities that are trying to protect the natural environment and to become more sustainable as a matter of local public policy – are different with respect to their advocacy communities. Different tests produced different results but some patterns come into view across the seven tables of crosstabulations and the three multivariate analyses detailed in Table 9. We can certainly conclude that overall, an active nonprofit sector is related to environmental protection and a substantive city commitment to sustainability. In different tests non-environmental nonprofits and environmental nonprofits were linked to positive outcomes for those who want cities to embrace environmental protection and sustainability. The role of neighborhood associations is a bit more difficult to interpret but it is evident that they are highly active in city politics and are strongly connected to their city councilors. Overall, we can conclude that city councilors operate in a policy network around the environment that is populated by resourceful and energetic nonprofits. As they make policy they know they are monitored by these groups and at the very least they talk to them on an ongoing basis.

Surprising, perhaps, the regression analysis, shows that labor unions are the only interest group sector that is positively and significantly linked to all three dependent variables. The decline of labor on the national level, characterized by sharp drops over time in the percentage of the workforce that is unionized, may have blinded us to the reality that unions are a vigorous and effective presence at the local level. One advantage that unions have over other urban interest groups is that they have a mandatory fee structure imposed on members. This funds a professional staff on the local level and local units are backed up by national unions that provide training and other forms of support.

Unions are often stereotyped as inimical to environmentalism because reducing pollution is seen as hostile to manufacturing interests. Yet unions and union leaders are progressive in their politics and not unalterably opposed to environmental protection. In the context of city politics economic development proposals are not usually choices between despoiling the environment and protecting it. Rather, labor may find itself supporting environmental protection or sustainable initiatives because there are jobs associated with new projects. Retrofitting a building, cleaning up a brownfield, or constructing mass transit lines are all good for the environment and good for the labor market.

Of all the advocacy sectors, the role of business is the most difficult to decipher. The negative coefficients (and lack of statistical significance) in the multivariate analysis may seem to suggest that business is something less than a dominant force in city politics. There is a tendency for the inclusion of business associations to be associated with the lack of sustainability policies and programs. An alternative interpretation is that local business, as a sector, is neither terribly concerned nor strongly opposed to most environmental protection or sustainability initiatives. Our own interpretation is yet a bit different. To begin with “business” is no one thing. The interests of a growing service sector are different from those of America’s declining manufacturing sector. Green businesses are still another component of this sector and cities are very eager to attract green businesses because they represent commerce of the future and not the past. Moreover, many businesses understand that attracting and maintaining a skilled, highly educated workforce is much easier in a city that is seen as attractive with amenities such as parks, bike paths, smart growth, mass transit, and energy efficient housing. And increasingly, local Chambers of Commerce and sustainable business roundtables are adding programs to promote green businesses.

Big business has long been seen by political scientists as central to the regimes that lead city government. Our first cut at the data from just one of the three surveys, tentative to be sure, is that contemporary cities are more politically diverse and more pluralistic in their interest group politics. Going forward the most potent regimes or governing coalitions may be those that bring together the interests of environmentalists, neighborhoods, green businesses, and civic and business leadership groups interested in positioning their communities as cities of the future.

Of course, what this analysis cannot do is sort out the causal underpinnings of governance for sustainability. The data do not, for example, support an inference that organizing a nonprofit in support of sustainability will greatly improve the chances that the city will adopt sustainability policies. And the analysis does not provide much insight into what kinds of local nonprofits are more likely to produce this result. There is a hint that local homegrown groups are probably more likely to be effective than statewide or national groups working in a local community. And there is a hint that groups whose missions are dedicated to environmental, climate change, and sustainability issues are probably more likely to be effective than groups whose missions are more general. But these are nothing more than hints to suggest what a fertile ground this presents for further exploration.

Table 9: OLS Regressions Using Commitment to Environmental Protection, Commitment to Sustainability, and the Existence of a Sustainability Program as Dependent Variables

Variable	Commitment to environmental protection		Commitment to sustainability		Existence of an actual sustainability program	
	Unstd coeff	significance	Unstd coeff	significance	Unstd coeff	significance
Inclusion of environmental groups	.247	.028	.149	.194	-.102	.116
Inclusion of nonprofit groups	-.091	.389	.132	.224	.068	.267
Inclusion of business associations	-.050	.691	-.091	.475	-.146	.046
Inclusion of neighborhood associations	.110	.337	.001	.996	.100	.134
Inclusion of labor unions	.221	.016	.196	.037	.149	.005
Councilor's concern about soil and water by toxic waste	.248	.001	.136	.080	.102	.020
Economic development vs environment	.367	.000	.307	.000	.086	.060
Commitment to private sector	.343	.000	.182	.048	.043	.401
Prevailing political ideology	-.022	.756	-.045	.549	-.100	.019
Adjusted r ² significance	.339 .000		.234 .000		.252 .000	

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Appendix 1: Sample Cover Letter for City Councilor Survey

June 25, 2009

«Salutation» «First_Name» «Last_Name»
«Job_Title»
City of «City»
«Address_Line_1»
«Address_Line_2»
«City_State_Zip»

Dear «Job_Title» «Last_Name»:

I am writing to you to ask for your help with the *Cities Face the Future* project currently being conducted at Tufts University. My colleagues and I want to understand how American cities approach policy choices involving economic development and environmental protection. The best way to learn about these policy choices is by asking those involved in making them to share their thoughts and opinions. You have been selected as one of a small number of people who we hope will be willing to share your thoughts. We understand that you probably are asked to participate in many surveys, and please accept the enclosed token \$1 bill in appreciation for your willingness to spend your time answering ours.

Our questionnaire is short—it only takes around 12 minutes to complete. If you would prefer to fill out the questionnaire online instead, please go to <http://ase.tufts.edu/polsci/council>.

Regardless of whether you fill out the questionnaire on paper or online we ask you to please fill out and return the enclosed postcard so that you can be entered into a raffle to win one of three \$100 gift cards to Amazon.com. This will also ensure that we will not contact you again.

When the survey is completed, we will prepare a summary report that compares a number of different cities. We will be happy to send you a copy of this report as soon as it is available.

Let us emphasize as strongly as we can that your responses are voluntary, and will be held in the strictest confidence. The questionnaire does not ask for your name or any other tracking information, and once the responses are entered into the computer the questionnaires will be destroyed. Indeed, we are required by the University committee that protects research integrity to keep responses confidential and anonymous. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at (617) 627-3465 or kent.portney@tufts.edu. Thanks in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Kent E. Portney, Professor

CITIES FACE THE FUTURE

Thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire about your city, economic development, and the environment. As noted in our cover letter, your answers will be held in the strictest confidence.

If you would prefer to answer these questions online, please go to
<http://ase.tufts.edu/polsci/council>

Part I *We start by asking some basic background questions about your career.*

1. As no personal identifying information will be connected to this questionnaire, it would be helpful to have just a little bit of background information about you. Since you began working, what occupational sector have you spent the *most* years in? *Please check.*

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At home | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

2. In what city are you a city councilor or commissioner? _____

3. And how many total years have you served on the city council/commission? ____

Part II *These questions concern policies and attitudes toward economic development and environmental protection.*

4. In every city there's always a lot of discussion about its economic climate. We know that cities differ considerably in the degree to which the city government tries to actively promote the growth and prosperity of the private sector.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating a strong commitment to promoting the private sector, and 1 indicating virtually no commitment to promoting the private sector, how would you rate your own city government? Please circle:

Level of commitment to promoting the private sector

None	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
1	2	3	4	5

5. One means that urban governments use to try to stimulate economic activity is to offer tax incentives to real estate developers or companies considering a move to or expansion within the city. Do you think your own city should rely more or less on this approach?

- We should increase the level of tax incentives for development
- We currently offer the right level of tax incentives for development
- We already offer too much in the way of tax incentives for development

6. Cities also vary considerably in their commitment to environmental protection. In your own estimation, how would you evaluate your local government's commitment to improving the natural environment of the city?

Level of commitment to environmental protection

				Very
None	Low	Moderate	High	High
1	2	3	4	5

7. We want to turn to another question about the environment, specifically *sustainability* and your city's level of commitment to balancing environmental degradation with environmental protection and improvement. Advocates of sustainability argue that we should meet the development needs of today's cities without compromising the needs of future generations. Thinking about all of the policies, programs, and initiatives of city government, how committed would you say your city is to this idea of sustainability?

Level of commitment to sustainability

				Very
None	Low	Moderate	High	High
1	2	3	4	5

8. It's sometimes the case that economic development and environmental protection come into conflict. Although each issue is unique in its own way, if you were to make a generalization about how city officials choose between competing visions of what is best for the city, how would you rate your local government?

Please check the statement that comes closest to describing your city:

- Strongly favors economic development
- Economic development somewhat more a priority
- Equal balance between economic development and environmental protection
- Environmental protection somewhat more a priority
- Strongly favors environmental protection

9. In recent years cities have been changing rapidly in terms of their local economies. Although new businesses emerge while older ones leave the city, they're not necessarily the same kinds of businesses. Today, what role do businesses play in city policymaking?

Please check the statement that comes closest to describing your city:

- Leaders from the business sector are highly involved in city policymaking
- Business is involved selectively on matters of importance to it
- Business is occasionally involved in city policymaking but its leadership role is clearly diminishing over time
- The business sector is generally not involved in city policymaking

10. To your knowledge, does your local government have a proposal or plan concerning how it will spend any economic stimulus funds received by the city from either the state or federal government?

- Yes No Don't know

10a. If you answered "yes" above, who was involved in formulating this plan? Please check any parts of city government and any nongovernmental organizations that were closely involved.

- Mayor City council/commission City administrators
- Business associations Specific corporations or businesses
- Church or faith-based groups Neighborhood associations
- Environmental groups Labor unions
- Nonprofit groups other than environmental
- Other organizations: (please specify one that was most closely involved) _____

10b. If you answered "yes" above, please specify the three highest budget projects or budget areas that would be funded according to the plan.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

11. For each of these environmental problems, please indicate if you personally worry about it a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all.

	<i>Great Deal</i>	<i>Fair Amount</i>	<i>Only A little</i>	<i>Not At all</i>
Pollution of drinking water	—	—	—	—
Pollution of rivers, lakes and reservoirs	—	—	—	—
Contamination of soil and water by toxic waste	—	—	—	—
Air pollution	—	—	—	—
The “greenhouse effect” or global warming	—	—	—	—

Part III *We focus here on organizations that may approach city government on issues of importance to them.*

12. In the course of doing your job, you come into contact with representatives of many different kinds of nongovernmental organizations. Thinking back over the past month or so, which of these sectors did you have the most contact with? By “contact” we mean telephone calls, meetings in your office, and meetings out in the community or in workplaces. *Please check one.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business associations | <input type="checkbox"/> Church or faith-based |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Labor unions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit other than
environmental | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood associations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specific corporations/businesses | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

13. Thinking about each of the sectors listed in the question above, how would you evaluate the quality of information they bring to your attention? For example, when they make a pitch for their position or hand you a memo or a study, just how reliable is their information? *For each sector please circle the appropriate number (or check don't know).*

	<i>Reliability of Information</i>					
	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Don't Know
Business associations	1	2	3	4	5	—
Environmental groups	1	2	3	4	5	—
Nonprofit other than environmental	1	2	3	4	5	—
Church or faith-based	1	2	3	4	5	—
Specific corporations/businesses	1	2	3	4	5	—
Labor unions	1	2	3	4	5	—
Neighborhood associations	1	2	3	4	5	—

14. Considering all the nongovernmental organizations in your city who sometimes interact with government, which do you believe have the greatest influence with city policymakers? Please give us the specific names of up to three nongovernmental organizations.

No need to rank, any order is fine.

Name _____

Name _____

Name _____

Part IV *This set of questions concerns the policymaking process in city government.*

15. Which of these sectors are most likely to be included in informal bargaining and negotiation with city officials? On issues involving both economic development and environmental concerns, what is the likelihood that you and your colleagues would include these sectors in your policymaking deliberations?

	<i>Very Likely To Include</i>	<i>Maybe/ Maybe Not</i>	<i>Not Very Likely To Include</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Business associations	___	___	___	___
Environmental groups	___	___	___	___
Nonprofit other than environmental	___	___	___	___
Church or faith-based	___	___	___	___
Specific corporations/businesses	___	___	___	___
Labor unions	___	___	___	___
Neighborhood associations	___	___	___	___

16. How would you describe the political views of those who work for city government? Are they predominantly liberal? Conservative? Moderate? On a scale where 1 indicates very liberal political views, 4 represents a middle point or moderate position, and 7 represents very conservative political views, where would you place the following:

	<i>Please Circle</i>							
	Very Liberal		Moderate				Very Conservative	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Most administrators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Most city councilors/ commissioners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The Mayor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Yourself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

17. Cities often mandate procedures designed to facilitate public involvement or citizen participation for economic development proposals, planning processes, or regulatory actions. Such programs vary greatly from agency to agency. Which of the following would you say generally characterizes such processes in most city agencies that try to facilitate public participation? *Check all that apply.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slows everything down | <input type="checkbox"/> Favors the loudest, not the wisest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New information comes to light | <input type="checkbox"/> Creates conflict |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Privileges narrow interests over citywide interests | <input type="checkbox"/> Leads to thoughtful discussion/deliberation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Promotes compromise | <input type="checkbox"/> Creates learning process for participants |

Part V *Our final set of questions center on city council/commission elections.*

18. Are you elected from a district/ward or at-large seat?
 District/ward At large

19. Thinking about the organizational sectors that we've asked about in other questions, would you describe them as generally supportive of your election, generally opposed to your election, or either neutral or apathetic? *Please check the appropriate box for each sector.*

	<i>Generally Supportive</i>	<i>Generally Opposed</i>	<i>Neutral or Apathetic</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Business associations	___	___	___	___
Environmental	___	___	___	___
Nonprofit other than environmental	___	___	___	___
Church or faith-based	___	___	___	___
Specific corporations/businesses	___	___	___	___
Labor unions	___	___	___	___
Neighborhood associations	___	___	___	___

20. Prior to your election had you ever served as an officer (president, treasurer, committee chair, etc.) in a neighborhood association? Yes No

Thank you!

Please return this questionnaire to:
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