Political Garbage and the Tale of Two Cities:

A Case Study Analysis of Waste Diversion Policy

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Chapter 1 – Problem Identification and Background

Introduction

Why would a city adopt command and control policy that mandates garbage and recycling service? More specifically, why might this policy be seen as a viable choice by city-level policy makers? This question is examined in the context of potential policy adjustments to municipal solid waste (MSW) management in the City of Edmonds, Washington. In general, policy makers are tasked with developing programs and initiatives to improve the well-being of their constituents while working within the constraints of limited resources. One approach taken has been the development of environmental policies that target MSW management which can both regulate how materials are disposed of or recycled by citizens and address broad issues, such as energy efficiency and waste reduction, which are key elements in the sustainability goals of many levels of government in Washington State. Established theory also provides evidence that adjustments made to MSW policy can influence the consumption habits of citizens, leading to a reduction in resources headed to the landfill and energy consumed (Miranda and Aldy, 2008). MSW management is a complex issue, however, that not only leads to policy-overlap by multiple levels of government due to the wide-ranging life-cycle of solid waste, but involves the daily choices and behaviors of businesses and individual residents. This dynamic between public policy and personal behavior is one that may result in contentious public debate and may not be politically feasible in all circumstances. Due to the limited resources of many city-level policymakers, such as the mayor or those on the city council of Edmonds, it may be a practical exercise to ascertain the political feasibility of MSW policy reform in advance by looking at a

number of variables, including, the form of city government, the political culture of the community and region, the potential for participation of special interest groups, and the policy trends of neighboring jurisdictions.

By looking at similar waste diversion policies and the actions of various stakeholders, policymakers in Edmonds might find a model for designing and implementing their own policy. Knowing the political viability of a given policy would help during the development process if only as a means of making efficient use of the limited time and resources a policy maker has at their disposal. They may find that even a strong policy could be met with a great deal of political opposition and be motivated to either alter their policy to decrease potential opposition, to choose another, or even to abandon the effort altogether. This research looks at previous MSW policy cases in Edmonds and neighboring Seattle, and conducts a political feasibility analysis to ascertain the political viability of implementing a mandatory 3-sort recycling[1] policy in the City of Edmonds. Even the strongest predictive models constructed by academics may not be supported by *real world* events, but applying policy innovation models from established research to this local policy cases is a means to begin building an Edmonds-specific political feasibility analysis, as well as a means of providing additional data for research that has yet to be done on the subject.

Background Information

A plastic bag filled with an empty Big Gulp cup, potato chip bag, and hotdog box – the skeletal remains of quick lunch - will be handled by both private and public solid waste workers,

[1] 3-sort recycling is the separation of garbage (materials not currently accepted for recycling), mixed recyclables (glass, paper, plastics, etc.), and compostables (yard waste, food scraps, soiled paper, etc.).

cross a number of jurisdictions, and be regulated by a variety of government agencies. All levels of government participate in efforts to affect MSW management with various policies, such as controlling the disposal of hazardous materials, citizen outreach efforts seeking to educate the public on ways to reduce waste and increase recycling participation, or more direct command and control policies such as mandatory recycling programs. The state has broad authority over the behaviors of local governments, businesses and citizens through such policies as approving rates for garbage service in non-contracted areas and mandating the availability, though not the usage, of recycling programs. Local governments often have more direct management of solid waste, and an increasing number of environmental advocates and policymakers argue that development of sustainability initiatives can be most efficiently pursued at local levels (Vig and Craft, 2003). Contracts with solid waste hauling companies and determining the required level of participation by the public are most often established at the city level. Snohomish County operates the facilities that process the hauled garbage, contracts for a landfill for current use while maintaining and monitoring landfills that have closed, and enforce local disposal laws through the county sheriff and deputies. Tracking and enforcing current MSW policy at the local level can be difficult as there are no means to prevent Edmonds residents from taking their garbage outside the county for disposal (Fisher, 2011; Greninger, 2011). However, extensive policy established at higher levels of government would not necessarily be the most efficient way to regulate MSW, in that local waste characteristics can be mischaracterized by the use of state averages in a way that makes it more difficult to tailor policy to the actual needs of the community (Chang and Davila, 2009; Vig and Kraft, 2003).

An Edmonds City Councilwoman hoping to move her city closer to its sustainability goals by diverting more waste from the landfill for recycling would have a number of city-level

policy approaches that might accomplish this, including citizen education programs, command and control policies such as mandatory service, or the adjustment of current policies. There are, however, a number of current MSW policies already in place that established theory suggests can lead to both increases in both participation and systemic efficiency. This might limit the number of additional steps the city could take to increase waste diversion through recycling.

Unlike some municipalities in the state, the city of Edmonds does not provide garbage hauling service and relies instead on a public-private partnership with three garbage companies, which effectively shifts the cost of hauling from the city to the companies and their customers. Municipalities that provide these services themselves have greater expense considerations in the operating costs of MSW management and, during economic downturns, may alter the extent to which they recycle, excluding items that are not currently profitable or suspending services altogether; and incurring additional expenses when informing the public of these changes (O'Connell, 2003). Edmonds also currently uses a multi-tier unit fee pricing structure similar to those that have demonstrated negative price elasticity and increased recycling rates, and has proven to stimulate source reduction (Jenkins, 1991). With a current system that largely maximizes efficiency and incentivizes recycling behavior, as well as leading to higher rates of efficiency and satisfaction, the city might look to other means of increasing recycling (Savas, 2000). Public education programs are also an effective means of influencing citizen behavior and are correlated with higher recycling rates: cities that have education and public outreach programs show higher recycling rates than cities that do not (USGAO, 2006). However, Edmonds has already made previous investments in this strategy and has staff that engage the public and business community on waste management issues through various means as part of their larger MSW management efforts (Fisher, 2011; USGAO, 2006). With a public-private

partnership, public outreach programs and multi-tier pricing currently in use, established theory would suggest that mandatory recycling is the most effective remaining step for Edmonds to increase recycling behavior (Miranda and Aldy, 1998).

Waste reduction and landfill diversion are included in the sustainability initiatives at many levels of government in WA State, including the City of Edmonds and Snohomish County. Policies associated with sustainability goals have contributed to the image of the Puget Sound region, and Seattle specifically, as being a national leader on the environment and have been generally supported by elected officials, the public, and by numerous environmental groups that influence policy through lobbying, publications, and voter outreach efforts (Abuelsamid, 2009; Benfield, 2011; Richter, 2006; Sustainlane, 2008; Vanity Fair, 2006; Watson, 2011). A number of businesses in the region have seen significant growth in recent years due to increased interest in their green products and services: The recycling industry in WA State already employs more than 4,000 people, has at least $850million in capital assets, and has seen growth in response to increased focus on recycling of organic materials, electronic recycling and the recycling of construction waste (Biocycle, 2002).

While reducing the volume of waste destined for the landfill could be accomplished many ways, it could be argued that expanding recycling participation is a more viable policy option for local politicians. Local government is responsible for establishing the required level of garbage and recycling services for the public. City-level politicians can be more limited in their policy reach and political strength than at other levels of government when it comes to influencing how materials are used by firms during manufacturing and in packaging, both of which could alter the volume of resources headed towards the landfill. Policy that targets the consumer-side of the economy may also be met with less resistance from industry groups while

still gaining support from environmentalists due to its sustainability focus, and recycling itself is not necessarily perceived as anti-business.

While there is research available on policy creation at various levels of government, most often on state or federal issues, there are a number of variables for policy innovation that could be considered in regards to Edmonds and the Puget Sound region. Local political characteristics can be considered for predicting the political culture influence on the viability of mandatory recycling. National voting trends that lead Tea Party Republicans and their anti-government, anti-regulation message to victory in local, state and federal races around the country in 2010 did not hold true in the Puget Sound area. While conservatives fared better elsewhere in the state, Democrats swept all the offices in the 21st and 32nd Districts, both of which cover part of Edmonds, as well as most offices in neighboring districts. With similar political climates, Democrats consistently hold the office of mayor in both Seattle and Edmonds, control both County Executive offices, and have majorities in both city and county councils. While political party does not necessary predetermine support for environmental policy, the Democratic Party has consistently made sustainability a pillar of their party platform and Democratic politicians have largely been driving sustainability issues in local and state government. Special interest and Republican Party money was spent in these districts just as elsewhere in the country, but the more liberal political climate, even with constituents stressed by a bad economic climate that occurred, locally, under the watch of Democrats, was not enough to bring conservative victories to the area. This voting trend could be a helpful consideration to those crafting environmental policy that would be directly or indirectly considered by voters.

The form of local government itself can also influence the development and origin of policy creation, and gaining support from various policy gatekeepers is an important part of

legislating. An Edmonds City Councilwoman would have two channels in which to pursue policy creation, choosing to seek a majority vote by the council and approval by the mayor, or to put the policy change on the ballot to be determined by the voters themselves.

Policy creation can be influenced by the success or failure of policy in neighboring jurisdictions. In choosing policy models to help in the development of MSW policy change in Edmonds, the city of Seattle provides a good example due to a number of factors, including proximity and political similarities shared by the cities. The involvement of special interest groups, sometimes well funded by national industry or environmental advocates with a vested interest in even local policy changes, can also play a significant role in shaping public policy. These factors are therefore included in my comparative case study analysis.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Perspectives on Policy Innovation

During its lifecycle, our goods cross many boundaries and touch many hands, from the early extraction of resources for manufacturing to the eventual reuse, disposal, or recycling of the product. Despite the participation of many levels of government in the creation of MSW policy, officials at the city-level play an important role by tailoring policy more closely to the actual needs of the community than might be done at higher levels of government (Chang and Davila, 2009; Vig and Kraft, 2003). Policy scholars have often categorized policy innovation drivers as being internal or external (Dolsak and Sampson, 2011). While these categories are useful for organizing theoretical perspectives on policy innovation from established models found in literature, such as Political Culture, Political Institutions, Diffusion of Innovation, and Interest Group Influence, this research is most interested in how these policy innovation drivers may influence the political feasibility of MSW policy reform in the City of Edmonds.

Political Feasibility

While there are a number of theoretical perspectives on policy innovation, this case study will look at how specific policy drivers may work within the context of the City of Edmonds to help predict the political feasibility of implementing mandatory 3-sort recycling. Even a minor MSW policy adjustment may be very tough to implement politically (Green and Nunberg, 2004). While it is arguable that the only certain way to measure the political feasibility of public policy is through its passage or failure in a specific place and time, understanding political realities may be the difference between a well-designed policy intervention that receives public support and

participation, and a failed policy that angers or alienates constituents and other stakeholders. (Green and Nunmberg, 2004).

Internal Policy Drivers

Political Culture. The role of government in a community is not easily defined and can be viewed differently depending on such things as political ideology, or change with circumstance, such as a government's role in providing security during a natural disaster versus a security provision in the form of 'red light cameras'. There might be public support for government action in one circumstance but not the other; consensus difficult to establish. There are, however, patterns of political culture embedded in American culture that allow for a general characterization of governmental role, such as *moralistic* or *individualistic* cultures. While these political culture characterizations are difficult to test empirically as explanations for state and local policy adoption, viewing the city of Edmonds and even the greater Puget Sound region through this perspective would be helpful in ascertaining the potential political culture into which MSW policy reform would be introduced, and therefore allow a broader understanding of the political feasibility of this policy (Miller, 1991; Zoellick, 2000).

In a *moralistic political culture*, government is seen as a positive force that creates policy that advances good for the society as a whole, even as it recognizes the value in policy addressing the needs of the individual whose well-being make up the communal good it strives for (Riley, 2010). In an *individualistic political culture*, government is seen as having a limited role in addressing the greater good of the community and should have a policy focus that encourages private initiative rather than one that seeks to regulate behaviors of the individual or provide for his welfare (Riley, 2010). Moralistic and individualistic culture would have the

government responding to the needs of the community by utilizing contrasting policy techniques. In terms of contemporary politics, an individualistic political culture might be seen as the ideal of Libertarians and Tea Party Republicans, while the moralistic political culture might be seen as the ideal of modern liberals and Democrats. The dominance of one party over the other could be representative of a majority opinion on the role of that government in the community, or at least serve as a substitute when other means of measuring are not available.

The city council in a moralistic society might ban or use taxation to mitigate certain undesirable behaviors, while the same council in an individualistic society may support private-sector market mechanisms with public funds to incentivize more efficient, desirable behaviors among constituents. In a moralistic society, there is a reduction of personal autonomy when government assumes a heavy role in providing the well-being for society, which effectively reduces freedom, justice, and the need for efficiency (Savas, 2000.) In a society where the individual is provided the freedoms necessary to achieve efficiency, the ideal of an individualistic political culture, quality of service and standards of living will improve (Savas, 2000). This view of active government policymaking breeding inefficiency and loss of liberty aligns with the individualistic political culture frame, and reflects the concerns voiced in opposition to sustainability reforms (Housekeeper, 2008; Thompson, 2009). However, even believing government policy is overreaching or an inefficient means to address a problem does not necessarily negate the support for what motivated the policy creation, which was to address a perceived need of the constituents.

One of the primary concerns for policy makers is determining potential initiatives that satisfy a basic need of their constituents for that policy (Feiock and West, 1993.) Discerning what needs to address in the diverse population of a modern society can be a complicated task

achieved through variety of means, including direct dialogue with constituents, responding to initiatives introduced by citizens or special interest advocates, or by prioritizing issue highlighted by the media. Policymakers at all levels of government, more broadly at the state and federal levels due to the scope of their legislative authority, have created policy to promote economic development in order to create jobs, increase productivity and promote new industries (Hanson, 1991). Some believe economic growth and public sector expansion would be negative and policy that is economic in nature would be minimized in regions that have expanding economies (Cameron, 1978). Due to the influence government has on the economy, even policy that impacts the economy, such as regulations, will be made on political grounds, rather than economical ones (Savas, 2000). However, environmental policy has also been supported as both a means of improving the health and well-being of its citizenry, and a driver of economic development through increased energy and operational efficiency, and by creating new opportunity for businesses in the development of a green industry (Dolsak and Sampson, 2011). Policymakers can be seen as having to create policy that can both lead to economic development while decreasing the negative impact of this economic activity on the environment.

Political Institutions. The form of government and process for assuming public office is different in many cities. Two common forms of government include council-mayor and council-city manager formats. In the first, both the mayor and council are policy creators. Power is shared through the mayor's ability to veto policy passed by majority vote in the council; and with the council's power to approve or disapprove of legislation introduced by the mayor, or even to overrule his veto through parliamentary procedure. Council members and the mayor may also circumvent each other by placing a given policy on the ballot for the public to vote on. Council-

city manager cities may not have a mayor, or have only a ceremonial mayor with limited duties and no policy veto power. City managers are hired and fired by the city council, and carry out the council's policy agenda while not being in the position to initiate policy themselves. While there can also be a city managers running the day to day tasks of the city underneath a strong mayor or a ceremonial mayor underneath a strong council and city manager, it is the ability to veto or initiate policy initiation policy that determine the format of government as described in this research.

Due to the dynamic of council-manager government, where the more traditional role of a city mayor is filled by a city manager hired and guided by the council, this system is often characterized as being more professional and efficiency-minded, which may predispose this type of government to policy adoption (Feiock and West, 1993). In a council-manager city, mayors have very little formal power, while in a mayor-council city, there is a shared power over policy (Morgan and Watson, 1992). In city council-city manager municipalities, the democratic process, and therefore the constituents, has less influence over the policy process, increasing the power council's economic concerns has over policy creation (Hajnal and Troustine, 2010). Big city mayors tended to have more authority and power than their small city counterparts, but informal tools of power, such as a mayor's ability to marshal popular support and media skills, contribute to a mayor's power nearly as much as formal powers, such as budgetary formation and veto rights (Morgan and Watson, 1992). Higher populations of environmental non-profits do shape the propensity for cities to adopt environmental policy in cities that were lead by mayors, environmental nonprofits not having the same effect on city manager cities (Sharp et al, 2011). However, reforms changing the form of local government had little long-term affect on policy formation and fiscal decision-making relative to machine-dominated governments, challenging

evidence that suggests electoral competition has a significant impact on policy innovations or implementations (Morgan and Pelissero, 1980).

In machine-dominated cities, city positions are often given to political allies and insiders – a traditional reward for party loyalty that could be seen by outsiders as cronyism: those who support the party are rewarded. Policy creators that follow the party line legislatively may also receive rewards of campaign support or coveted appointments, while the more independent-minded might be ostracized or even attacked by their own party, which could have a definite impact on policy creation and prioritization (Nichols, 2011; Schroyer, 2011; Stirewalt, 2011). It could be argued, therefore, that a lack of electoral competition and partisan dominance over the legislative process could therefore lead to less innovation unless the policy adoption were seen as beneficial to the party itself. Yet nonlinear functions provide empirical evidence supporting the contention that differences in party competition, as measured by vote percentages, have relatively little policy impact where a single party has relative electoral dominance (Wright, 1975). The type of elections can have an influence over policy creation as well. Elections that are considered *at-large* are those in which all registered voters may vote on all candidates for public office, unlike district representation elections in which candidates are voted on by only those constituents living within a given portion of the municipality. At-large elections tend give more power to the majority which tends to give policy influence that can favor business interests (Hajnal and Troustine, 2010).

External Policy Drivers

Diffusion of Innovation Model. Policy adoption created as a response by progressive governments to the actions of other jurisdictions is conceptualized as a Diffusion of Innovation Model, and in this model some groups of policymakers are seen as leaders in policy creation, others as laggards that respond to the actions of others (Feiock and West, 1993). While there has been less research done at the local level, there is policy innovation at the state level that shows an identifiable pattern in which a number of states created innovative policies that later became the model for policy adoption elsewhere (Walker, 1969). States can also shift between the category of policy leader, middle-adopter, or laggard depending on the specific issue or time-frame (Savage, 1978). The evidence of regional distinctions in policy innovation suggests that when relevant issues rise that 'strike a chord' in a particular area of the country, a new set of policy innovators may emerge as they have in the past (Savage, 1978).

High salient issues are ones that are either perceived as important or get a lot of attention, and can appeal to voters on an emotional level, such as personal-rights issues like abortion or sweeping environmental reform, like cap and trade policies or bans on individual consumer products. Low complexity issues are ones that are easily understood or at least ones that are perceived to not require extensive research by policy makers. High salience, low complexity policies are likely to spread more rapidly because politicians may be in favor of policy that both require less background research and receive a great deal of media attention (Nicholson-Crotty, 2009). Past research suggests that the timing of similar policy introduced for consideration in their respect legislative bodies is indicative of innovation diffusion, while limited in that it doesn't explain the precise mechanism by which the policy was introduced (Mintrom, 1997). One likely explanation for the adoption of policy innovations is to be found from external

competitive pressure, though the adoption of innovative policies is more complex than this and should be approached accordingly by policy makers (Walker, 2006). Interaction between policy entrepreneurs from elsewhere is a strong signal of innovation-diffusion, in that their ideas are shared or borrowed; lessons learned from their strategies, and successes or failures (Mintrom, 1997).

Interest Group Influence Model. While research on the influence of special interest groups on city-level policy is more limited than at higher levels of government, some scholars have found their influence to be a dominant force in the policymaking process and suggest that the existence of substantial support or opposition to a given policy in a community will likely determine its passage or failure (Feiock and West, 1993). However, such things as a dense population of non-profit interest groups stimulate participation in noneconomic policies, but do not have a similar effect on economic policies, especially multi-state or regional compacts; business-oriented organizations tending to push for more localized policy (Bowman and Woods, 2010). Additional research has found that there was not significant support for the influence of interest groups on policy innovation or adoption (Mitchell and Feiock, 1988). These conclusions might be challenged in the face of $3.5 billion spent in 2010 by special interest lobbyists to influence federal policy alone or the growing investments into influencing local policy issues, such as bans on single-use plastic bags and changing from mayor-council to council-manager forms of city government (Cornfield, 2011; Doucette, 2011; Knott and Roth, 2011). Such stark contrast between the findings of scholars and the very purpose of what has become a multi-billion dollar industry might also suggest that lobbyist influence on policy creation may be growing over time. This question, however, is beyond the scope of this research.

Other literature states that not only do special interest groups have influence over policy creation, but they appear to have higher levels of influence on policy adoption in cities that are run by mayors, rather than those run by city managers (Sharp et al, 2011). This suggests that special interest influence might be more significant on elected officials, especially those more politically isolated, like a mayor, rather than the multiple members of a council. Others suggest that politicians might be motivated by self-interest to enact legislation that benefits a particular group because there are interest groups willing to pay[2] politicians in advance for the policy and the costs associated with investigating these exchanges are often prohibitive (Macey, 1986).

[2] Through political support, campaign expenditures and donations, and often future employment, rather than actual payments of cash to the individual which would be illegal in most instances.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to help understand the political feasibility of a mandatory 3-sort recycling policy in the City of Edmonds, I use a comparative-case study analysis design in conjunction with a Feasibility Assessment Technique. A comparative-case study is a variant of the same methodological framework as a single-case study, but can be considered more compelling due to a more robust study (Yin, 2010, p 53). A Feasibility Assessment Technique is commonly used to predict the outcome of a legislative process by estimating the probable support of policy actors to assess the relative feasibility of policy (Gupta, 2011, p 238). This mixed-method approach is used to pose complementary questions to gain insights into the causal process present in certain policy events that could assist city-level officials in their policy design process (Yin, 2010, p 174-175).

A comparative-case study analysis was performed on contemporary MSW policy interventions in the cities of Edmonds and Seattle to provide a picture of the variability that can exist between the success and failure of similar policies in neighboring municipalities. Case studies are useful in explaining the presumed causal links in real-life policy interventions that are sometimes too complex for a survey or experimental strategy, which can be beyond the scope of the research due various issues, such as prohibitive cost or lack of access to policy actors (Yin, 2010, p 19). This methodology offers a distinct advantage when *how* or *why* questions are asked about contemporary events over which the researcher has little or no control, and is advantageous for predictive purposes (Yin, 2010, p 9-13). Comparative case study analysis is useful because the analytic benefits arising from multiple cases may be more substantial and reliable than those derived from a single case analysis (Yin, 2010, p 61).

As part of case study, a content analysis was performed on secondary information on the 2004 passage of mandatory recycling and failure of a bag fee to pass in 2009 in Seattle, as well as the successful passage of a 2009 bag ban in Edmonds in order to identify common themes and patterns that could be ascertained between the policy process in the three cases (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). Due to the reliance on archival data, especially media coverage of the policy events, an exploratory case study approach was used as a means to establish and emphasize possible predictive characteristics to be found within the policy events (Yin, 2009, 9).

Information on the Political Institutions Model was gathered from city websites. The nature of this model was particularly useful in testing significance by comparing the appropriate quantitative data of Edmonds and Seattle to those U.S. cities that have adopted or failed to adopt plastic bag bans in the last decade. The relative policy strength of the mayor and council were made by the discerning the origin of the policy and dynamic between the two policy-making entities as depicted in media reports.

Political Culture evaluations were made from a look at the level of partisan dominance in the region, from policy platforms and plans at multiple levels of government in the region, and from issues raised by various policy actors during the debate process. While public vote outcome was noted as part of this model evaluation, it did not inform this study as strongly as media reportage of public opinion because only one of the initiatives considered went on the ballot.

Diffusion of Innovation Model considerations were made from the timing of similar initiatives, the various relationships between stakeholders introducing them, as well as through statements made by those who initiated the policy.

Interest Group Influence determinations were made by looking at media coverage and public record on expenditures made by special interest groups, their presence at public meetings and forums where meeting minutes were available, and by looking at the fate of the policy being introduced.

A Feasibility Assessment Technique was used to estimate the probability of support by current member of the Edmonds City Council and mayor for a mandatory 3-sort recycling program (Gupta, 2011, 238). Evidence from the comparative case study analysis may also serve to increase or decrease the likelihood of successful passage of mandatory 3-sort recycling in the City of Edmonds.

While much of the data used in this evaluation was secondary, it was preferred to methods such as an Expected Utility Stakeholder Model or other forms reliant on direct surveying of stakeholders in order to prevent potential bias in the responses due to the relatively small population of stakeholders being analyzed and how their prior relationship with the researcher might influence survey responses (Gupta, 2000, p 239; World Bank, 2004).

City-level data on average income was gathered for this study from federal census records, city websites, and city-fact databases available online. Information on the various types of city government - mayor and city council vs. city executive and city council - were taken from city websites and media coverage of city operations. Level of influence determinations for the mayor and members of the Edmonds City Council were ascertained from approved council meeting minutes and media coverage surrounding the plastic bag ban. Secondary information on the participation of special-interest groups, policy origin, and influence of policy in neighboring municipalities were taken from newspaper reports and editorials, blogs, and advocacy group

websites and publications. Additional primary data for the diffusion-of-innovation model was gained from interviews and correspondences with elected officials and public employees.

Data for the Feasibility Assessment Technique were gathered from approved city council meeting minutes for the six-month period beginning November 1, 2010 through May 3, 2011. This period was chosen for a number of reasons: the use of a recent six month period of council meetings would allow for a better picture of the current leanings of the council on environmental issues; because during this six month period all current city council members were in office; and during periods prior to this six month block, current council members were either not in office or had recently been appointed to fill vacancies. Attention will be paid primarily to the voting records and opinions expressed by city council member to ascertain likely support for environmental-based policy initiatives. Opinions stated during the meeting and to the press will also be used to supplement their voting records.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

During the summer of 2009, Edmonds and Seattle both considered policies targeted at reducing the number of single-use plastic bags destined for the landfill. While the policies were originally passed by their respective city councils (though in different years), each resulted in a very different outcome. Also of interest is a case in which Seattle passed a mandatory recycling program for residents and business, similar to the policy proposed within this research for the City of Edmonds. The characteristics of these three policy cases can inform the political feasibility of mandatory 3-sort recycling in Edmonds.

Single-use plastic shopping bags have been the focus of both environmental groups and public policy throughout the United States and around the world (Lowy, 2004; Roach, 2008). These bags have been named by Guinness World Records as the most ubiquitous consumer item in the world, 102billion of them used each year in the U.S. alone, which is an average of 500 per consumer per year (Doucette, 2011). These bags are difficult to recycle due to the lack of locations or companies receiving them, and can clog the machines of recycler companies when improperly included with other recyclables (Doucette, 2011). The EPA estimates that approximately 1% of single-use plastic bags were recycled in the year 2004 (Plastic Bag Economics, 2011). Some argue that these bags are unnecessarily targeted by environmentalists and politicians; that their reuse by customers as garbage liners and for pet waste is not sufficiently considered; and that recycling programs for these bags, while relatively limited compared to many other materials, are growing in number every year (American Plastic Manufacturing, 2008). Regardless, the limitation, taxation or outright ban of single-use plastic bags continues in WA State and throughout the world.

Another significant policy initiated by Seattle Mayor Nickels was a mandatory 3-sort recycling policy similar to the one being considered by this research. Due to the incremental nature of recycling programs in the Puget Sound region – the initial provision of recycling services mandated by the state, the funding of education initiatives to increase participation, then expanding the number of materials being recycled - it is reasonable to view this policy as a *next logical step* in a waste reduction, a mission of local government policy that has been supported for decades. Seattle and Edmonds, as well as King and Snohomish counties, have long-term sustainability goals that serve to guide the policy development and program management beyond the terms of current office holders. This effort towards waste and energy reduction is championed by Democrats at the state and federal levels as well. Electing officials that have sustainability as part of their platform not only institutionalizes these concerns, they also lend support to the argument that these policymakers are viewing this as a mandate from the electorate that they are then responding to with additional environmental policy.

In the following section, three case studies - *Plastic Bags: Seattle*, *Plastic Bags: Edmonds*, and *Mandatory Recycling: Seattle* – will be considered in context of the four policy innovation drivers found in the literature, followed by a feasibility assessment technique to look at the potential passage of a mandatory recycling program by the city government in Edmonds.

Plastic Bags: Seattle. Seattle Public Utilities estimated that approximately 360million of these disposable bags were used in the city each year and the proposed ordinance to place a $0.20 fee on each bag was projected to reduce that number by fifty percent, while bringing $10million in potential revenue to the city (Brunell, 2009). An exception would be made for

small businesses – those grossing less than $1million in annual sales would be allowed to keep the $0.20 but would be encouraged to make multiple-use bags available in their stores. The Seattle bag proposals had initially been approved by a city council vote, though it was originally proposed by Mayor Nickels to the council for their consideration.

On July 28, 2008, with two council members absent, the bag fee was passed 6-1 by the Seattle City Council, along with a Styrofoam ban on take-out food containers that passed 6-1 (Chan, 2008). The proposition had been a relatively contentious one despite its decisive passage by the council. Council President Richard Conlin was contacted by 4,500 people on the issue, and it was a well covered topic by local and national media (Chan, 2008). While Seattle Councilman Richard McIver was in the hospital and not present to vote against the city council passage of the plastic bag fee, he would later say that he believed it was an example of city government overreaching in their attempt to be green (Chan, 2008).

Also of interest is how heavily interest groups participated in this case. Groups working in support of both the Seattle bag fee and the Edmonds bag ban included People for Puget Sound and a related group, the Green Bag Campaign, but were vastly outspent by opponents of the measure. Groups that invested resources in opposition to what they started referring to as the bag tax, were the conservative-leaning Washington Policy Council (WPC) that stresses market solutions for a broad spectrum of public policy issues around Washington State; the American Chemistry Council (ACC,) an Arlington, Virginia based advocacy group that represents plastics and chlorine manufacturers; and the Washington Food Industry, a trade group representing independent grocers.

The WPC contributes to the public discourse through their publications and editorials, and by holding conferences on policy and governmental issues. As a prominent conservative voice on issues facing the public, they are subsequently sought out by various media for opposition opinions on local stories, but do not engage in more direct action. This was true of their involvement in opposition to the proposed bag tax: They voiced concerns that it was an inefficient means to reducing energy consumption and offered their own calculations to demonstrate this. The WPC estimated that the average cost to consumers with the bag tax would be $119 per person but emphasize an admittance by Mayor Nickels that it would only reduce the equivalent of 4/100ths of one percent of the cars on the road in King County, yet it would cost $10million to create the same environmental benefits that could be acquired for less than $300,000 (Housekeeper, 2008; Meyers, 2009). The ACC, however, participated more aggressively in the policy process through their outreach subsidiary Progressive Bag Affiliates. Under the names Progressive Bag Affiliates and Coalition to Stop the Seattle Bag Tax, the latter which was a partnership with 7-11, Inc., the ACC collecting 15,099 valid signatures out of the 22, 292 they submitted, well exceeding the required 14,372 necessary to put the bag tax on the next ballot, though there were complaints that the paid signature gatherers were using disingenuous tactics and a number of signees thought they were acting in support of the ban, not to overturn it (Chan, 2008; Holden, 2009; O'Carroll, 2008; Holden, 2008; Le, 2009). The WFI employed paid signature gatherers as well, but to a much smaller extent, collecting only 2,800 unverified signatures two weeks prior to the deadline (Spangenthal-Lee, 2008).

Political Institutions Model. Seattle has a mayor-council government. While the literature suggests that a council-manager form of government might make a city more prone to policy implementation, Seattle and former mayor Greg Nickels have taken a nationally recognized

leadership role in sustainability initiatives. This might be explained by the tendency for big city mayors to have more legislative authority than those in smaller municipalities or the influence of a relatively high concentration of environmental non-profits in the region.

The Seattle bag fee was proposed to the council by Mayor Nickels during his first term, a period of relative popularity after which Nickels easily won reelection despite a 40% approval rating (Barnett, 2011). However, his approval rating had fallen to 31% leading up to the bag ban vote in 2009 and he would go on to place third in the primary election (Connelly, 2009;). It is difficult to say that his unsuccessful bid for reelection played a decisive role in the defeat of the plastic bag fee because it was largely represented by the media as the policy of the council (Yardley, 2009). Yet Nickels had risen to national prominence as an environmental advocate and his sustainability efforts were a large part of his reelection bid (Yardley, 2009). Even had his approval rating been higher and increased the likelihood that he could have come forward as a champion for the bag ban, it is arguable that he would not have been able to control how the policy debate was framed in the media, which was heavily influence by a $1.4milion ACC advertising campaign against the policy. The influence of the ACC and the means of its defeat (public vote) suggest that the strength of the mayor and council played less a role than the influence of special interests and the means of policy passage – a public vote rather than one made by the city council.

While much of the literature covered policy adoption based on city government, less could be found on policy adoption by public vote, which ultimately decided the fate of the plastic bag fee in Seattle. Further research may help determine the likelihood of government initiated policy adoption when put to a public vote versus government passed initiatives or citizen initiatives.

Political Culture Model. Seattle and Mayor Nickels had become a nationally recognized leader in sustainability policy by the 2009 election cycle, host to numerous environmental groups, and enjoyed an image of driving technological advancement through companies like Amazon and Microsoft, while embracing the outdoorsy lifestyle, due in no small part to companies like REI and North Face calling Seattle home. Sustainability goals had been passed and initiated at the state level with their 2009 WA State Beyond Waste Plan, and locally with the 2009 City of Seattle Climate Action Plan which updated previous sustainability goals. Democrats held majority control on both city and King County councils. Though the mayor would lose in his bid for reelection in 2009, it would be taking third in a primary behind two other Democrats. Despite these variables that would suggest an environment supportive of green policy innovation, the region had also supported a number of libertarian citizen initiatives that sought to decrease taxation and government fees. It cannot be stated absolutely as to whether this anti-taxation sentiment played a significant role in the defeat of the bag fee, but it should be noted that a public vote is present in this policy case alone amongst the three. It is arguable that political culture played less of a role in this policy adoption, or possibly that the culture itself was changing.

Diffusion of Innovation Model. While Seattle and Mayor Nickels had become nationally recognized leaders in sustainability policy, there is evidence that policy innovation in other cities influenced the introduction of the bag fee in Seattle. In 2007, Mayor Gavin Newsome of San Francisco, a contemporary of Nickels that was also hailed by the national media for his sustainability efforts, became the first in the country to pass a bag ban - a year prior to Seattle City Council vote on the bag fee and two years prior to the public vote. Oakland would also pass a bag ban in 2007 but was later forced to overturn it when a lawsuit successfully argued that the

city had not done enough to investigate the environmental impact of increased paper bag usage that might follow a ban on plastic grocery bags (Faroog, 2009). While I was not able to find any verification that these Bay Area policies had any influence on Nickels, the timing suggests that Nickels would have been aware of them, and sharing the Vanity Fair title of Green Heroes with Newsome might also suggest a potential rivalry for innovation in sustainability.

Interest Group Influence Model. Aside from the policy adoption by public vote circumstances, what may have played the most significant role in this policy case was the investment of time and money made by special interest groups into this policy process. Groups from outside the state joined with a few minor local players to gather enough signatures to take the power of implementing this policy out of the hands of city government and on the ballot for public vote. They spent millions on advertisements and other means of communication to influence public opinion on the matter and faced little organized opposition from bag fee supporters. It is beyond the scope of this research to measure the influence these great expenditures might have had on this policy process, but it is the only one among the three cases that saw any significant participation from special interest groups and is the only one of the three to fail.

Plastic Bags: Edmonds. In 2009, Edmonds City Council President Strom Peterson considered a per-bag fee system similar to Seattle's proposition that would have charged Edmonds residents for the estimated 8million plastic bags they used each year, but later decided on a proposition to ban them outright (Lei, 2009). On July 28, 2009, the Edmonds City Council passed Ordinance No. 3749 banning the use of single-use disposable bags by a vote of 6-2. Like

their counterparts in Seattle, the Edmonds city council initially considered a potential ban on Styrofoam that year as well, but that proposal did not gain enough momentum to be brought to a vote.

The bag ban did not see any significant resistance during the policy development phase, though two council members cautioned that this policy may be government overreach and offered that a city as small as Edmonds would have very little impact on global warming as another reason not to ban plastic bags (Thompson, 2009). A primary concern for residents from the public forums regarded secondary uses they had for the bags that would no longer be readily supplied during their grocery and drug store shopping, including dog waste pickup and for disposing of incontinence products, the latter a matter of particular concern by members of the large senior community in Edmonds. The irony of the secondary-use concern is that the bags used in this manner were not being recycled but simply used as a receptacle for other waste on its way to the landfill. This works against the ACC contention that a better form of landfill mitigation is to expand recycling awareness among consumers, and that while the recycling opportunities for plastic bags are greatly limited – they are not currently accepted by any of the garbage and recycling haulers in Edmonds, for example – this form of mitigation is preferable to a ban (PBA, 2007). A primary concern from businesses that was raised during the public discussion period was that the ban was simply too restrictive, though testimony showed support for the ban from local businesses as well and provisions were made, such as a year adjustment period prior to implementation, to address the concerns of business owners (Kahn, 2011).

There have so far been no attempts made to overturn the ban once it was passed by the council in 2009. Edmonds law states that signatures gathered from 15% of registered voters, totaling approximately 4,012 in 2009, would have been sufficient to move the approved bag ban

in that city to a public vote, and yet the ACC did not pursue this option as they did in Seattle, choosing instead to send a representative to speak out against the proposal during one of the city council meetings but none of the subsequent meetings in which it was discussed (Holden, 2009; Thompson, 2009).

One reason for the ACC to have invested so much to put a council approved measure before a public vote in one city but so little effort in the other might be due to the different economic impacts each policy would have on the industry the groups lobbied for. They may have reasoned that a 50% decrease in Seattle's 360million bags used each year was worth a more expensive fight than a ban on 8million bags used per year in Edmonds. They may also have reasoned that the television, radio, and print ads the ACC purchased in their $1.4million fight - against the mere $80thousand raised by supporters of the Seattle bag fee - would have been seen, read, and heard throughout the region and influenced the Edmonds vote as well (Grygiel, 2009). Though they invested little to fight the plastic bag ban in Edmonds and none since is passage, the ACC continues to invest in fighting plastic bag initiatives around the country, such as doing public outreach outside Montgomery County, Maryland grocery stores in 2011 (Duboise, 2011). However, municipalities and counties continue to impose bag bans, including cities and counties in California, Hawaii, Texas, and Colorado, as well as a grassroots effort in Bellingham to become the second city in WA State to ban them (Duboise, 2011; PBBR, 2011). Representatives from both of the legislative districts containing part of Edmonds, have co-sponsored bills during the 2011 WA State Legislature Regular Session that would issue a statewide ban on the use of these plastic bags, overriding any municipal law that outlaws or permits usage (Duboise, 2011). Neither bill, however, passed through committee and were tabled for consideration during a future session.

Political Institutions Model. Like Seattle, Edmonds is a council-mayor city. Mayor Haakenson, who signed the bag ban into law in 2009, had previously shown strong support for environmental policies but would soon resign his position to become the deputy executive for Snohomish County, suggesting more strength in the council during the time of this policy development. The literature supports that a small town mayor would have a relative lack of strength in terms of policy innovation, though this may be limited to a particular point in time for Edmonds and possibly for this issue alone. While prior research might again suggest that a council-manager form of government would be more likely to lead to policy innovation, Edmonds has been a leader in sustainability policy in Snohomish County, whereas neighboring Mountlake Terrace, a city-manager government, has not.

Political Culture Model. Like Seattle and King County, Edmonds and Snohomish County have been largely dominated by the Democratic Party. Sustainability goals have been established by the 2010 City of Edmonds Climate Change Plan and Snohomish County developed the Green Ribbon Task Force 2009 Sustainable Climate and Energy Initiative, which included support to local municipalities in their efforts. This suggests a general political culture in Edmonds that would be supportive of environmental policy innovations. There were, however, governmental overreach concerns raised by both Democratic and Republican council members. Their concern, when coupled with the recent success of libertarian, anti-tax citizen initiatives, suggest the potential for public outcry on command and control policies in general, let alone an outright ban on a commonly-used product. Unlike the Seattle bag fee, this Edmonds opposition was limited to some lively discussion during public forums on the issue, but appears to have evaporated once the policy was signed into law. There have been no further attempts to bring up the issue for debate.

Diffusion of Innovation Model. While Edmonds Council President Peterson consulted with Seattle City Council members during the policy design phase, he states that the plastic bag ban was an issue he'd long considered and was not directly influenced to initiate it by either the Seattle bag fee proposal or earlier bans in San Francisco or Oakland. The timing of his policy, however, suggests at least a policy momentum on the issue in that there were three notable cities engaged the issue in the two years prior to the Edmonds vote. Prior research also supports that the sharing of information between Peterson and Seattle City Council members would itself have increased the likelihood of policy adoption. However, even if the Seattle bag fee was not a direct influence on the policy innovation in Edmonds, the timing of the bag bans and fees proposed in other cities suggest that policy makers were being influenced similarly and in the same time frame, possibly by the same special interest groups or media reports. Potential bans on plastic bags have been proposed at the state level by legislators representing the Edmonds area, and in cities such as Bellingham, WA, all of which have cited the Edmonds ban as a model. This also suggests that diffusion of innovation is influencing policy makers in the Puget Sound region on this issue, whether they are aware of it or not.

Interest Group Influence Model. While the limited role of special interest involvement in the Edmonds bag ban suggest that interest group influence (or rather the relative absence of it) played a large role in the policy adoption, it is difficult to discount the regional media expenditures of the ACC during the same election cycle. The plastic industry advocates did not gather signatures to get the Edmonds ban on the ballot as they had the Seattle bag fee, nor did they participate in public forums to the extent, but they may have considered their millions invested in fighting the Seattle bag fee as a regional investment that would be seen by Edmonds citizens who would then speak out against the proposed Edmonds ban. However, ACC

involvement has also been inconsistent in similar policy decisions across the country and they've yet to get involved with the 2011 efforts in Bellingham or in the WA State legislature. It would appear that the organization is being selective in choosing which battles to take and may invest more heavily where there is greater opportunity to influence the outcome.

Mandatory Recycling: Seattle. Unlike the 2009 plastic bag fee, Seattle's 2003 passage of mandatory recycling faced little opposition and passed without debate in a unanimous vote by the council due in part to concessions made for elderly or frail citizens, and the removal of food-waste requirements as originally proposed by Mayor Nickels (Young, 2003). Additional requirements and the expansion to business were approved by the council and implemented over the next 5-6 years. Initial resistance from the group Washington Policy Center simply called for a thorough analysis of all aspects of the policy to determine whether the benefits from the inclusion of food waste into the mandatory recycling program are sufficient to justify it (Young, 2003). The following year, a conservative business group called the Seattle Business Climate Coalition (SBCC), comprised of members of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce (GSCC) and the Downtown Seattle Association, called for a repeal of the mandatory recycling rules as part of wish list of resolutions issued to the mayor and city council (Virgin, 2005). However, this wish list also included broad, unrelated issues ranging from replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct and other transportation projects, to reductions in crime and land-use regulations (Virgin, 2005). However, despite the participation of GSCC members in forming the SBCC report, the city had been working with a Chamber of Commerce group called Resource Venture to develop a recycling education drive focused on the commercial sector (Gillespie, 2005). While the SBCC report claimed that the mandatory recycling program should be dropped

because of the burden it imposed on businesses, other businesses owners saw increased recycling as a means to significantly cut down their operating expenses, and the Washington Restaurant Association trade group said its local members were not against even the more stringent concept of food-waste recycling (Gillespie, 2005; Virgin, 2005; Young, 2003). While there may have been grumbling for individuals facing fines for non-compliance, there were no organized or well funded efforts to oppose or overturn the mandatory recycling laws in Seattle.

Political Institutions Model. As previously stated, Seattle has a mayor-council government. While the literature suggests that a council-manager form of government might make Seattle more prone to policy innovation, Seattle has taken a nationally recognized leadership role on environmental issues. This might be explained by the tendency for big city mayors to have more legislative authority than those in smaller municipalities or the influence of a relatively high concentration of environmental non-profits in the region. The origin of the policy was again with the mayor and suggests a strong policy leader in Nickels, as does the acceptance of his initiative by the council. The mandatory recycling policy was proposed by Seattle Mayor Nickels during his first term, a period of relative popularity after which Nickels easily won reelection despite a 40% approval rating (Barnett, 2011). As with the Seattle bag fee, the mayor's recycling policy was passed by the council. This issue, however, was not challenged to any significant extent and signatures were not gathered that would have required a public vote before the proposal became law. The power to implement policy remained in the hands of the government in the Seattle mandatory recycling proposal, as it did in the Edmonds bag ban, and in both cases, the policy became law.

Political Culture Model. During this period, Seattle and Mayor Nickels were already nationally recognized for their sustainability policy by the 2009 election cycle, and home to

numerous environmental groups. Sustainability goals had been passed and initiated at multiple levels of government, and Democrats held majority control on both city and King County councils. However, the region had also supported a number of libertarian citizen initiatives that sought to decrease taxation and government fees, which suggests the potential for resistance to a mandatory recycling program. Seattle already had a well developed recycling program that regularly enjoyed some of the highest participation rates in the country, which might suggest that recycling was already an accepted part of city culture. It might also have been the staggered implementation included in the policy design that prevented libertarian-leaning public sentiment from being triggered, as might the general support and participation from local businesses, many of whom recycled voluntarily. However, it is difficult to say that political culture played any significant role in this policy innovation because the same city, policy creators, and constituents were present during both Seattle policy cases. Yet one failed, while the other did not.

Diffusion of Innovation Model. Similar to the plastic bag fee case, there is little evidence that policy innovation in other cities influenced the introduction of the mandatory recycling policy in Seattle. However, Mayor Gavin Newsome of San Francisco, also hailed by the national media for his sustainability efforts, became the first in the country to pass both a bag ban and a mandatory recycling program similar to the one in Seattle. As previously stated, I was not able to find any verification that these Bay Area policies had any influence on Nickels, but the timing suggests that he would have been aware of them. His sharing the title of Green Heroes with Newsome might also suggest a potential rivalry for innovation in sustainability. This potential for diffusion of innovation would inform the introduction of the policy, however, but not why it was adopted into law by the council. It is also notable that neighboring municipalities, while

debating their own bans and fees on plastic bags, have not yet proposed mandatory recycling policies.

Interest Group Influence Model. Unlike the proposed bag fee policy, the mandatory recycling program in Seattle faced little opposition. The WPC spoke against it through the media, but no industry groups invested money to shape or defeat it; and the majority of the published opinions came after the bill had passed. Tepid support from the Washington Restaurant Association, whose members would be significantly impacted by the introduction of food waste recycling in later stages of implementation, could be seen as a sign that special interest groups were not concerned enough to shape the policy through opposition to it; and while environmental groups showed public support for the policy, they had not initiated the proposal with Mayor Nickels. This suggests that the lack of interest group involvement had a significant role in the passage of policy in this case, though not in its proposal.

Feasibility Assessment Technique: Mandatory Recycling in Edmonds. A feasibility assessment technique (FAT) is a commonly used, versatile technique that can be used at any point in the policy making process to predictive, among other things, legislative outcomes (Gupta, 2011, p 238). This assessment will be limited to the current Edmonds mayor and city council members and will be used to predict their potential support for a mandatory 3-sort recycling program. While Gupta (2011) may suggest a broader analysis that includes more policy actors, such as citizens and representatives of the garbage companies, it is beyond the scope of this study due to limitations in both access to company officials and their willingness to divulge company information, and due to the magnitude and cost of surveying public opinion. It may also have been appropriate to include a survey of interest groups as part of this analysis due

to the inclusion of the Interest Group Influence Model in the case studies, the very selection and omission of potential groups introduces bias (Gupta, 2011, p 239). However, there was no evidence of significant interest group investment to the support or opposition of the Seattle policy, so there are no guidelines from that case study as to which groups might take part in this hypothetical policy development, let alone a balanced sample of such groups to survey. While relatively limited in scope, including just current policymakers from Edmonds narrows the assessment to just those whom vote or sign city policy into law, and helps to remove the potential bias Gupta (2011) cautions against.

In preparation for the political feasibility analysis for mandatory 3-sort recycling, data was compiled from approved Edmonds City Council Meeting Minutes, as shown in Appendix A. Primary focus was paid to the voting behavior of each councilmember in regards to proposed environmental issues during the six-month period beginning November 1, 2010 and ending May 3, 2011, as well as the vote on the 2009 bag ban. While cataloging the various characteristics of the policy makers, attention was paid to a number of factors that help determine the relative issue position, availability for resources, and potential for policy influence of each policy maker. Gupta (2011) summarizes the steps of the Feasibility Assessment Technique as:

- Identifying the policy issue: *Mandatory 3-sort Recycling in Edmonds*
- Identifying the player groups: *Edmonds Mayor and City Council*
- Estimating the issue positions of the individuals
- Estimating the available resources for each individual
- Estimating the resource rank for each individual
- Calculating the feasibility assessment index

Table 2.1 illustrates Relative Issue Positions data based characteristics of each stakeholder as determined by their votes for and against policies related to the environment and energy efficiency: the final approval of solar panel lease agreement for the roofs of public buildings on April 5, 2011; an endorsement of SB1489/SSB 5194 proposed in the state legislature bill that would seek a ban on the sale of fertilizers containing phosphorus in the State of Washington on March 1, 2011; an endorsement of SBH 1721 that sought to prevent storm water pollution from coal tar sealants on March 1, 2011; and the November 16, 2010 proposal to renew the inter-local agreement with Snohomish Conservation District. In the case of the mayor, the act of signing of the policies into law, rather than vetoing it, is used as a substitute for voting.

Not included in this table were the June 2, 2009 votes for or against the 2009 bag ban - Peterson voting for the proposal, Wilson and Plunkett against – due to the absence of Bernheim and because Fraley-Monillas, Petso, and Buckshnis were not yet in office. The absence of this vote does not influence the final position value assigned to each policymaker because they are being ranked only on those votes taken during the chosen sixth month period when all current city council members were in office. **Table 2.1** illustrates the Relative Issue Position for each policymaker, which is informed by their votes on the four environmental policy issues during the selected time period.

Table 2.1 – Relative Issue Position Data:

Policymaker	Votes For	Votes Against
M. Cooper	1	0
M. Plunkett	1	3
S. Peterson	4	0
A. Fraley-Monillas	4	0
D. Buckshnis	4	0
D.J. Wilson	3	1
S. Bernheim	4	0
L. Petso	2	2

Table 2.2 illustrates the Relative Issue Positions values for each policymaker as numerical values on a scale of potential support from -1.0 against the mandatory recycling proposition to +1.0 in favor, based on the data in **Table 2.1**. Due to there being four environmental votes during the period analyzed and a two-point scale on the Relative Issue Position chart, each vote illustrated in **Table 2.1** was given a quarter-point value (0.25) to determine each Relative Issue Position illustrated in **Table 2.2**:

Table 2.2 – Relative Issue Position Values:

Policy Maker	Relative Issue Positions
M. Cooper	+ 0.25
M. Plunkett	- 0.75
S. Peterson	+1.0
A. Fraley-Monillas	+1.0
D. Buckshnis	+1.0
D.J. Wilson	+ 0.75
S. Bernheim	+1.0
L. Petso	0.0

Table 2.3 illustrates the Availability of Resources values for each policymaker, based on the variables administrative capabilities, communication capabilities, and legitimacy. These variables were chosen over other common variables, such as money or time, because it is difficult to measure the amount of money each policymaker might spend to sway public opinion or time each would have to work towards its passage. The variable Administrative Capabilities was chosen due to the practical ability to introduce policy and to set the policy agenda for the council. Communication Capabilities was chosen as a variable due to the potential influence to be had in forming public opinion on an issue via the media, and what affect this might have on public reaction during the policy creation phase: The public is allowed to speak during most city council meetings, and the council holds additional public forums on many policy issues. Legitimacy, based on elected versus appointed status, was included due to the high number of

policymakers having been appointed to their positions and because the public may be more willing to stand behind a policy introduced or supported by an official they've elected than by one not chosen by citizens to be their representative. These criteria were also measureable for each current policymaker, while such things as public opinion on a given policymaker would be more difficult to measure. The values are presented on a scale of 0 to 1, with each variable given a 0.33 value. An additional 0.01 value was added to each policymaker score to give the scale a total potential value of 1.

The mayor and council president were each given 0.33 values for their agenda setting capabilities. The remaining policymakers were given a 0.165 value for their agenda setting capabilities due to their equal standing in relation to each other, and because their capability is less than the mayor or council president's. Communication capabilities were based on access to the media, which would allow the policymaker additional ground to sway public opinion, which could increase or decrease public support for a given policy. The mayor and council president were given a score of 0.33 due to their elevated positions in city government. The remaining council members were assigned a 0.165 value due to their similar access to the media, a lower score than was given to the higher prestige positions of council president and mayor. Councilman Wilson, however, was given an additional 0.165 value due to his hosting a community television show focused on public policy. While a community television channel would have a much lower viewership than such things as political commercials run during a primetime television show, it is a vehicle for shaping public opinion on a given policy that the other council members do not have. Legitimacy scores were based on known citizen support for that candidate: Elected officials were given a 0.33 value for their legitimacy, while appointed officials were not. Mayor Cooper and Councilwomen Petso and Buckshnis were appointed to

their positions, while Councilmembers Plunkett, Peterson, Fralei-Monillas, Wilson, and Bernheim were each elected by the public.

Table 2.3 – Availability of Resources Values:

Policy Maker	Admin	Comm	Legitimacy		Total
M. Cooper	0.33	0.33	0	0.01	+0.67
M. Plunkett	0.165	0.165	0.33	0.01	+0.67
S. Peterson	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.01	+1.0
A. Fraley-Monillas	0.165	0.165	0.33	0.01	+0.67
D. Buckshnis	0.165	0.165	0	0.01	+0.67
D.J. Wilson	0.165	0.33	0.33	0.01	+0.835
S. Bernheim	0.165	0.165	0.33	0.01	+0.67
L. Petso	0.165	0.165	0	0.01	+0.34

Table 2.4 illustrates how the Potential Policy Influence value for each council member can be calculated by multiplying their Issue Position values (a) by their Available Resources values (b) from **Tables 2.2** and **2.3**.

Table 2.4 – Potential Policy Influence Values:

Policy Maker	Issue Positions (a)	Available Resources (b)	Potential for policy influence (a x b)
M. Cooper	+0.25	+0.67	+0.1675
M. Plunkett	-0.75	+0.67	-0.5025
S. Peterson	+1.0	+1.0	+1.0
A. Fraley-Monillas	+1.0	+0.67	+0.67
D. Buckshnis	+1.0	+0.67	+0.67
D.J. Wilson	+0.75	+0.835	+0.6263
S. Bernheim	+1.0	+0.67	+0.67
L. Petso	0.0	+0.34	0
Total			+3.3013

Table 2.5 illustrates the Ranking of Resources values for each policymaker based on the amount of resources each might be willing to commit to influence the outcome of the council

vote on this potential policy. The values given are based on the number of votes for or against environmental issues during the six-month period analyzed, chosen because they are a quantifiable means of gauging general support for environmental policy. While their support for environmental policies do not necessarily translate to potential expenditure of resources, there were no discernable resource expenditures made by any of the policymakers during this period that could guide this research. These votes also provided a means of differentiating between policymakers on a scale: polarized voting for or against an issue can be contrasted with those whose votes were evenly split. Level of support for or against environmental issues was therefore chosen as the best means available to estimate resource value rankings, as illustrated in **Table 2.5**. These values were determined by assigned the total number of *potential* votes for environmental policies a positive value of one (4 votes x 0.25 value per vote = 1) and subtracting by the number of votes *against* environmental policies during the time frame analyzed. The resulting values were then made positive when necessary because the expenditure of resources would be considered the same whether made in support or opposition of a given policy. As an example, **Table 2.5** illustrates Councilman Plunkett as having a resource value ranking of 0.50, based on the following formula: 0.25 (Yes votes) - 0.75 (No votes) = - 0.50. This value is then made positive for a Resource Value Ranking of 0.50.

Table 2.5 – Ranking of Resources Values:

Policy Maker	Ranking of Resource Values
M. Cooper	1.0
M. Plunkett	0.50
S. Peterson	1.0
A. Fraley-Monillas	1.0
D. Buckshnis	1.0
D.J. Wilson	0.50
S. Bernheim	1.0
L. Petso	0

Table 2.6 illustrates the Calculated Policy Influence. A feasibility score is calculated by multiplying the Potential for Policy Influence (a) by Ranking of Resources (b).

Table 2.6 – Calculated Policy Influence:

Policy Maker	Potential for policy influence (a)	Ranking of Resources (b)	Feasibility Score (a x b)
M. Cooper	+0.1675	+1.0	+0.1675
M. Plunkett	-0.5025	+0.50	-0.2513
S. Peterson	+1.0	+1.0	+1.0000
A. Fraley-Monillas	+0.67	+1.0	+0.6700
D. Buckshnis	+0.67	+1.0	+0.6700
D.J. Wilson	+0.6263	+0.50	+0.3132
S. Bernheim	+0.67	+1.0	+0.6700
L. Petso	0	0	0
Total			+3.2394

While the positive feasibility score of 3.2394 suggests a positive outcome for the mandatory recycling policy vote on the council, this is only a best-estimate of a limited sample taken from current policymakers and not the broader, ever fluctuating political climate in which they make their decisions.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Limitations

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to assess the feasibility of proposing mandatory 3-sort recycling in the City of Edmonds by analyzing three policy events in Edmonds and Seattle: the successful 2009 ban of plastic bags in Edmonds, the 2004 passage of mandatory recycling in Seattle, and the unsuccessful 2009 bag fee initiative in Seattle. A number of factors from the literature and case studies suggest that the mandatory recycling proposal is politically feasible in Edmonds: proximity to Seattle, who passed a similar policy in 2004 that has received popular support for nearly a decade; the lack of special interest involvement in the Seattle recycling initiative or the bag ban in Edmonds; the general support for recycling among Edmonds businesses, some of which already recycle food waste voluntarily; the density of environmental groups in the region; and the success of the bag ban, as well as there being no subsequent effort to overturn it. However, electoral politics seem to play a significant role not addressed by the literature. A bag fee was passed easily by the Seattle City Council only to be overturned by a public vote. Therefore, it could be argued that while it appears the mandatory recycling policy is politically feasible in regards to city council approval, this does not translate to public support. However, moving this power of policy approval from the council to the voting public would take an organized opposition with the means and incentive to gather the required signatures.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This research is limited to a single region and a brief period of time, and the findings are therefore not easily applied to similar circumstances in other regions or on broader issues, especially those that are not environmental in nature. The sample of elected officials are also limited to those currently holding office in Edmonds, and while the often changing environment of electoral politics should give caution for those who would use the findings of this research to address the feasibility of actual policy, it does provide a framework from which to begin. Future research of the feasibility of mandatory 3-sort recycling might be well served to broaden the scope to encapsulate the results of more U.S. cities, or to conduct a survey of support among current elected officials and other stakeholders, such as citizens and interest groups, which may provide more accurate insight into the political feasibility of this policy issue.

Appendix

Appendix A: 2011 Edmonds City Elected Officials (Mayor and Council)

Elected Official	Means of taking office	Role on Board	Prior positions	Votes for environmental proposals 2011	Votes against environment proposals 2011
Mayor Mike Cooper (D)	Appointed. Seeking election to first full term in 2011.	N/A	State Representative, Snohomish City Council, Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee	Signed solar panel lease agreement into law.	
Michel Plunkett (R)	Appointed in 2008, Elected 2009			Voted to extend contract with Snohomish Conservation District	Voted against solar panel lease, fertilizer ban, coal tar pollution prevention endorsement. Voted against bag ban in 2009.
Strom Peterson (D)	Elected	Current Council President	Downtown Edmonds Merchannts Association President. Lost 2007 bid for the council. Beat Buckshnis in 2009.	Votes for solar panel lease, fertilizer ban, coal tar pollution prevention endorsement, conservation district. Proposed 2009 bag ban.	None
Adrieene Fraley-Monillas (D)	Elected		Lost to Wilson in 2007, Defeated Petso in 2009	Votes for solar panel lease, fertilizer ban, coal tar pollution prevention endorsement, conservation District	None
Diane Buckshnis (D)	Appointed. Seeking election to first full term in 2011.		Lost to Peterson in 2009.	Votes for solar panel lease, fertilizer ban, coal tar pollution prevention endorsement. Conservation district	None
D.J. Wilson (D)	Elected	Former Council President	Defeated Monillas in 2007 for current position	Votes for solar panel lease, fertilizer ban, coal tar pollution prevention	Voted against conservation district. Voted against the 2009 bag ban.
Steve Bernheim (D)	Elected. Not seeking reelection in 2011	Former Council President		Votes for solar panel lease, fertilizer ban, coal tar pollution prevention, conservation district. Voted for bag ban in 2009	None
Lora Petso (D)	Appointed. Seeking election to first full term since 2004.	Current Council President Pro Tem	Edmonds City Councilwoman 2000-2004. Lost to Plunkett in 2005. Defeated in 2009 by Monillas. Olympic View Water and Sewer District	Votes for fertilizer ban, conservation district.	Votes against solar panel lease agreement and coal tar sealant pollution endorsement

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