Opportunities and Challenges of Citywide Main Street Programs: Examining the Urban Environment, Coordinating Structures and Political Realities in the Application of the Four Point Approach

Ryan Rinn
Virginia Commonwealth University

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Opportunities and Challenges of Citywide Main Street Programs: Examining the Urban Environment, Coordinating Structures and Political Realities in the Application of the Four Point Approach

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Ryan Christopher Rinn,
Master of Urban and Regional Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University, May 2012
Bachelor of Arts, Rhetoric and Communication Studies, Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, University of Richmond, May 2004

Director: Michela M. Zonta, PhD,
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May, 2012
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Abstract

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF CITYWIDE MAIN STREET PROGRAMS: EXAMINING THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT, COORDINATING STRUCTURES AND POLITICAL REALITIES IN THE APPLICATION OF THE FOUR POINT APPROACH

By Ryan Christopher Rinn, Master of Urban and Regional Planning

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012

Major Director: Michela M. Zonta, PhD, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

The Main Street Four Point Approach to commercial revitalization has been applied successfully in thousands of communities across the U.S. Starting in 1995, citywide coordinated programs began applying the balanced points of organization, design, economic restructuring and promotion to urban environments. This thesis focuses on the opportunities and challenges present in five citywide Main Street programs in Boston, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Orlando and Portland through quantitative inquiry and interviews with program administrators. This thesis discusses density, capacity, volunteerism, vernacular culture, and politics as emergent themes of the urban application of the Main Street Approach and recommends expanding the breadth of definition and flexibility of each of the Four Points as to be more applicable and successful in the citywide context.
CHAPTER I: Introduction

Before the takeover of the automobile and the rise of the shopping mall, urban commercial districts were a hub of activity that met the convenience needs of nearby residents. As highways streamlined activity from the suburbs to central business districts they by-passed neighborhood shops, chopped up communities, and isolated poor populations. Many urban commercial districts saw drastic economic and social disinvestment, high vacancy rates and falling property values (Squires 1992; Zielenbach 2000; Furgeson & Stoutland, 1999; Levy 2011). Several approaches arose to address this decline, including the Main Street Approach.

The Main Street Approach to commercial revitalization started in 1977 as an effort to revitalize rural downtown districts across the United States suffering from decline and disinvestment (National Trust Main Street Center 2009). Offering an asset-based, historic preservation-centered strategy to renew capacity and economic development in these places, the Main Street Approach uniquely combines both place-based and people-based strategies to commercial revitalization. The Main Street Approach has been widely successful in improving rural downtown business districts when the local communities are willing to provide the difficult organizational work necessary to see their districts come back to life. Over the more than 30 years since its inception, the Main Street Approach has assisted in revitalizing thousands of rural downtowns.

In 1985, the National Trust Main Street Center applied the Four Point Approach of organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring to urban neighborhood business districts for the first time. In an effort to show that this strategy would work in all areas needing commercial
revitalization, the same tools and techniques proven successful in rural downtowns were adopted by local organizations seeking to reverse the trends of decline and disinvestment in urban commercial districts. Different urban neighborhoods across the country have since utilized the Four Point Approach to varying degrees of success.

In 1995 Boston, MA, in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, started the first citywide, multi-district Main Street Program. Since this time, four other cities have embarked on establishing independent citywide coordinated programs to assist in the revitalization of their urban commercial districts: Baltimore, MD, Orlando, FL, Washington, DC and Portland, OR. A relatively new development, citywide Main Street Programs are still working through the application of the Main Street Approach to unique urban environments. Through empirical research and qualitative inquiry, this thesis aims to understand if there are unique opportunities and challenges that citywide Main Street Programs face in the application of the Four Point Approach - because of their urban environments, coordinated structures, and political realities. These results will guide questions for further inquiry and programmatic recommendations for improving the application of the Main Street Approach by citywide coordinating programs.

First, I present a review of the relevant literature on downtown revitalization, neighborhood economic development, neighborhood revitalization and community development. Then an explanation of the methodology which describes the use of both quantitative data and interviews to address the above stated hypothesis. These data are reported in the results section of the paper which highlights emergent themes that build the discussion chapter. Finally, an analysis of the
reported results discusses issues such as density, volunteerism, vernacular culture and politics as both opportunities and challenges present in the unique urban application of the Main Street Approach.
CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Theoretical Background

In order to understand the unique challenges faced by citywide Main Street programs, the literature will be examined to identify the driving questions behind urban commercial revitalization. This review of urban commercial revitalization literature highlights the challenges and opportunities common to the urban context, illuminates the political realities, and examines the organizational structures of revitalization efforts.

The Main Street Approach is both a theory in planning and a specific approach to commercial revitalization. The Main Street Approach to commercial revitalization brings together both place-based and people-based elements to forge partnerships, recruit businesses, improve façades and coordinate marketing and events. As a theory in planning, the Main Street model operates under the assumption that commercial district revitalization can best be achieved through a collaborative and incremental effort between persons and organizations that have a stake in a specific commercial district. These stakeholders include local businesses, merchants, property owners, local government, private investors and engaged volunteers.

The theory suggests an equal reliance on the Four Points of organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring (National Trust Main Street Center 2009). These points overlap with one another to form a strong foundation for commercial revitalization. Organization focuses on building cooperation and collaboration among various stakeholders under a stable structure.
This point also outlines the importance of volunteer recruitment, diversified funding and budgeting. Promotion outlines the ways through which the commercial district employing the process can become a destination, with a positive and unique image that builds community pride. Promotion also guides brand development, advertising, marketing activities, calendaring and events for establishing the identity of the commercial district. Design looks to the place-based goals of façade and building improvement, signage, and a welcoming and attractive physical environment to attract visitors, investors and new businesses. Economic restructuring focuses on business retention and recruitment, highlighting the unique opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses in a commercial district.

More specifically, the eight principles of the Main Street Approach, which apply to each of the Four Points, will assist in understanding and evaluating the citywide programs. The eight principles are: 1) comprehensive, 2) incremental, 3) self-help, 4) partnerships, 5) identifying and capitalizing on existing assets, 6) quality, 7) change, and 8) implementation (National Trust Main Street Center, 2009). Comprehensive applies to the multifaceted nature of the Main Street Approach - no one project or goal should define the commercial revitalization effort. Incremental suggests focusing on small and achievable goals. Self-help means that leadership must come from within and be developed out of the community. Partnerships refer to building a collaborative table through which to carry out revitalization efforts. Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets means utilizing the built and social capital resources already present to highlight the uniqueness of the commercial district. Quality highlights that every aspect of the revitalization effort must maintain the highest levels of involvement from stakeholders and proper follow through. Change is a motivational principle that encourages practitioners of the
approach to re-imagine the commercial district and make believers out of doubters.

Implementation means meeting the incremental goals set out in the revitalization process to show that positive change is occurring. These principles together form the basis of an evaluative tool when assessing existing practices, challenges and opportunities in the case studies of citywide Main Street programs.

**Commercial Revitalization**

Although a topic of great import and extensive practice, the literature on urban commercial revitalization is varied in scope and generally lacking in empirical research (Seidman 2005; Sutton 2010; Weisbrod and Pollakowski 1984). Indeed, the meaning of “commercial revitalization” is not widely agreed upon by theorists or practitioners, and incorporates a broad range of activities including physical development of infrastructure; creation of business incentives and subsidies; real estate and housing development; business development, attraction and retention; promotion and marketing; and coordination of business district activities and provision of services (Seidman 2005; Sutton 2010; Arefi 2002; Ferguson 2005; Padilla and Eastlick 2009). Commercial revitalization in general, refers to the leveraging of assets and overcoming of obstacles in commercial districts to bring about a better physical environment, a better place to do business and a better economy (Seidman 2005).

Notably, the generality of the term requires a more specific definition for its use in this thesis. Following Sutton’s (2010) normative vision for the interplay between commerce and community life, I assert that commercial revitalization must not be conceptually confined to the development of economic or physical capital, but also include the growth of social capital which has been
identified as an important and necessary complement to the former factors (Arefi 2002; deSousa Briggs 1997; Seidman 2005; Sutton 2010; Padilla and Eastlick 2000). As the National Trust Main Street Center (2009) explains, “Because Main Streets are places that matter, the revitalization and comprehensive management of these districts have become essential to the health and vitality of every community” (p. 8).

Informed by the Main Street Approach, the scope of urban commercial revitalization for this thesis goes beyond “retail expansion and diversification” activities (Sutton 2010, p. 353), to include critical social and political factors such as civic engagement, community interaction and collaborative partnerships (Sutton 2010; Seidman 2005; Arefi 2002).

Therefore, this review will draw from four primary areas of research and theory: downtown revitalization, neighborhood economic development, neighborhood revitalization and community development. Although referred to as distinct streams of literature and research, these topics are inextricably related and necessary for understanding the complex social, economic, political and organizational aspects of all the activities undertaken in urban commercial revitalization.

In order to understand the unique challenges and opportunities facing citywide Main Street programs, I will discuss the literature on the urban context of commercial revitalization in terms of economic, social and political theories.
The Urban Environment - Economic, Social and Political Theories that Help Explain the Unique Challenges and Opportunities for Citywide Main Street Programs

Cities are endlessly complex systems of people, politics, markets and history that are anchored in a specific geography. The underlying economic and social fabric of cities provides the rich context in which citywide Main Street programs operate. There are a number of economic and social theories that seek to explain how and why the city works the way it does. Political theories, in tandem with these social and economic explanations, bring to light the function of power in the urban context. This review pulls from these theories to describe the unique challenges and opportunities in an urban environment for the application of the Main Street Approach. While each of these topics is discussed in separate sections of this literature review, they are all three interrelated and function together inside of the urban environment.

Economic Theories

Efforts in commercial revitalization are grounded in foundational theories of urban economics, which center on examining how scarce resources are allocated across space (Rosenthal and Strange in Arnott and McMillen 2006). As Jacques-Francios Thisse (2010) describes:

“There are sizable and persistent spatial variations in population sizes, average incomes, regional production structures, the cost of living and the distribution of jobs. All these magnitudes are endogenous and the value they take are not imposed by nature. On the contrary, they are determined by the interaction between markets, public policies, and the mobility of production factors. It is the spatial facet of these numerous interactions that forms the real of economic geography” (p.288).
This spatial basis provides a context for examining specific markets, bringing together multiple economic concepts and applying them to a geographic area (Bluestone, Stevenson and Williams, 2008). Theories in urban economics help form the framework upon which many of the approaches to urban commercial revitalization are based, and therefore the underlying assumptions on which they operate.

Location Theories - Where Businesses Locate and Why

Location theories seek to explain how firms choose their location and why, providing insight into the distribution of economic activities across a city or region (Glaeser 2008; Blakely and Green Leigh 2010; Arnott and McMillen 2006). This is based on the assumption that businesses can choose to locate in certain places, and those choices are informed by the specific advantages and disadvantages of a place in relation to the maximization of profit and the minimization of cost (Glaeser 2008, Blakely and Green Leigh 2010).

Traditionally, the scope of this theory was limited to the cost of transportation of goods to production or to market, but with recent developments that have greatly decreased the relative cost of transportation to a business, this is no longer the only factor considered in the location of firms (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010). Other factors such as logistics, labor costs, costs of energy, availability of suppliers, local regulatory climate, education and training facilities, cost of land and other elements are all part of the location decision for businesses (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010).
Urban commercial revitalization strategies often involve an attempt to manipulate the cost and attractiveness of these factors to bring businesses back to commercial districts. For example, a local government might provide tax incentives that effectively lower the cost of real estate, invest in transportation or create a special district to ease regulatory burdens on developers and businesses (Seidman, Porter 1995, Blakely and Green Leigh 2010, Weisbrod and Pollakowski 1984). However, it has been shown that used in isolation, these place-based strategies do little to attract new investment to downtown, stimulate job growth or facilitate the expansion of existing businesses (Weisbrod and Pollakowski 1984, Harrison and Glasmeler 1997, Bates 1997).

Advances in information and communication technologies have made it increasingly less important for businesses to be tied physically to their suppliers or markets (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010), making the more intangible characteristics of a location very valuable, including the cultural and natural amenities, recreational opportunities, reasonable cost of living and overall quality of life (Carr and Servon 2009; Lamore, Terry and Blackmond 2006; Blakely and Green Leigh 2010).

Indeed, these intangible attributes are gaining recognition as important drivers of economic growth, with a recent study by the Knight Foundation (2010) finding that social offerings, openness and aesthetics are among the top factors that draw people to a location. The Main Street Approach acknowledges the distinct advantages that these unique community characteristics and emotional connections provide in the marketplace (National Trust Main Street Center 2009). Reflecting a comprehensive and asset-based approach to developing the attractiveness of locational factors, or what recent literature classifies as developing a sense of
place, the Main Street methodology is based on an understanding that “uniqueness is one of the forces that create economic value” (National Trust Main Street Center 2009, p.14). This assertion follows Carr and Servon’s (2009) concept of “vernacular culture” as an important piece of amenity-based development strategies.

Vernacular culture recognizes that the distinctiveness of cities is created by the people who live there. As Carr and Servon (2009) state, the essential meaning of vernacular is that the “people who create the culture and the businesses must own the culture and be rooted in place” (p. 229). It is the intricate layering of their interactions with each other and the built environment that shapes the personality of a place and creates an appealing, attractively authentic experience. Indeed, strategies that build on vernacular culture incorporate people and place as equally important elements of sustained economic vitality.

This idea has important implications for ethnically diverse urban communities, especially, where the leveraging of local cultural assets can improve integration with the regional economy and produce broader employment opportunities (Bates 2006; Carr and Servon 2009; Loukaitou-Sideris and Hutchinson 2006). Many researchers have found that capitalizing on the unique attributes of a location can enhance economic competitiveness, while failure to support the preservation and development of local culture can result in the outflow of investment from the community (Carr and Servon 2009; Bates 2010; Cortright 2002). Others have noted the critical role of development of unique, locally rooted characteristics as a strategy for economic development in a highly mobile society (Johnson 2002; Lamore, Terry and Blackmond 2006; Arefi 2002).
**Agglomeration Economies and Central Place Theory**

Within location theory, there are two important and related concepts that are necessary in order to understand the urban economic context for revitalization: agglomeration economies and central place theory. Together, these theories describe some of the structural challenges to urban revitalization, particularly in severely disadvantaged areas.

Agglomeration economies refer to the advantages that occur from spatial proximity (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010, Rosenthal and Strange 2006). The concept of agglomeration economies is central in understanding the reason certain uses and business types cluster within urban areas, and what those patterns mean for the scope and potential impact of commercial revitalization activities.

By locating near one another, firms realize cost savings, either through the greater availability of information about new technologies, access to larger markets or more specialized suppliers, there are specific benefits that allow them a competitive advantage over firms that are located in less developed areas (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010, Harrison and Glasmeler 1995). Out of this theory has developed an approach to urban commercial revitalization based on “clusters,” or the strategic attraction and development of complementary business (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010; Porter 1995; Silver 1991).
In application, however, policies premised on these theories present troubling patterns in growth and decline for commercial districts. Specifically, the plight of certain neighborhoods and relative success of others that has created the noted “retail gap” in some urban communities, particularly those of African Americans (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010, Bellinger and Wang 2011). As informed by Myrdal’s (1957) agglomeration theory of cumulative causation, market forces will increasingly pull resources, skills and economic activity to certain areas, causing some areas to accumulate increasing wealth while others grow disproportionately disadvantaged (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010; Harrison and Glasmeler 1995). As others have noted, a cluster strategy requires an “existing, substantial accumulation of diverse economic activity” to attract greater investment, posing a challenge to addressing persistent disinvestment (Harrison and Glasmeler 1995, p. 36).

Harrison and Glasmeler (1995) suggest that for this approach to be effective in attracting investment to reinvigorate struggling commercial corridors, there must be an understanding of the “social embeddedness of networks,” (p.35) or the connections between businesses and institutions. As discussed by Granovetter in his landmark 1985 article, the social and economic realms are inextricably linked, with the economic behaviors of individuals and institutions constrained or enabled by dynamic social relations. Economic decisions become overlaid with social content, building the role of personal relations and networks in securing economic advancement. These relationships are important at all levels of economic interaction, influencing any transaction that takes place. For instance, business buying and selling relationships, the essential forward and backward linkages that hold together clusters of industry, are deeply rooted in social contexts - businesses consistently choose to place repeat orders with known suppliers.
Likewise, many researchers have shown that the hiring patterns of businesses follow this network theory, with employment opportunities being very closely linked to the depth and breadth of personal networks (Bates 2006, 2010; Loukaitou-Sideris and Hutchinson 2006). Small businesses in particular, important components of urban commercial districts, tend to operate through personal networks of family members, relatives, friends and friends of friends (Bates 2006). This pattern becomes a significant challenge for the growth and development of minority-owned businesses where systemic barriers exclude these groups from expanding into larger markets. Access to education, capital and government and corporate contracts have all been cited as major challenges for minority businesses.

The development of minority businesses is a critical yet under examined piece of urban commercial revitalization. As Bates found in his examination of urban employment growth, traditional place-based strategies have been largely ineffective in reaching residents in minority neighborhoods. The establishment of Enterprise Zones and other incentives designed to lure businesses to downtown locations has indeed resulted in job growth, with 75% of metro areas experiencing central-city job growth between 1998 and 2001, however, there has been little impact on persistent unemployment and underemployment, with these same cities experiencing no change in poverty rates (Bates 2006). Bates found that irrespective of location, non-minority business owners hire a majority of non-minority employees while minority business owners hire minority employees. Current economic revitalization strategies remain focused on providing financial incentives to attract businesses to low-income or economically depressed urban areas while ignoring the importance of networks in creating economic opportunity. These strategies have been criticized for rewarding businesses that would have chosen to operate in that location
anyway while doing little to encourage job creation and the hiring of minority residents (Porter 1997, Bates 2006, Seidman 2005).

The literature thoroughly illuminates the challenge of attracting economic activity to a location where there are no existing business relationships to build on, citing broadly that perceptions of the district, including safety of surrounding neighborhoods and potential market demand, impede reinvestment (Seidman 2005; Silver 1991; Blakely and Green Leigh 2010; Padilla and Eastlick 2008; Robertson 1995; Nelson, Burby, Feser, Dawkins, Malizia and Quercia 2004). However, data show that there is actually significant market demand in urban neighborhoods and the past decades have seen an unprecedented reduction in crime rates (Seidman 2005; Porter 1995; Harrison and Glasmeler 1995). This calls into question the traditional concept that private business and market forces will reinvest in urban neighborhoods if the public sector steps aside (Porter 1995).

Indeed, the Main Street model operates on the findings of Harrison and Glasmeler (1995), and many others since, that provide evidence that the location and resultant clustering of firms does not occur in isolation of other social and political factors (Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006; Bates 1995, 2010; Sutton 2010; Johnson 2002; Seidman 2005). As Bates and others argue, economic strategies that focus on place alone and pay little attention to the people that live there will not revitalize America’s cities (Bates 2006, 2010; Granovetter 1985; Carr and Servon 2009; Ferguson 2005).
In line with the literature, the Main Street model is based on an understanding that changing perceptions and building relationships are key to strengthening the economic viability of urban commercial corridors. The Main Street Approach builds on the untapped assets of both people and place, whereas “corporations and governments often underestimate the economic muscle of downtown and neighborhood commercial districts, particularly those serving disadvantaged residents of modest means” (National Trust Main Street Center 2009, p. 13). The literature echoes this criticism, and calls for a paradigm shift, supporting a move toward asset-based approaches that acknowledge the social, cultural and economic connections that residents, visitors and businesses have to urban commercial districts (Carr and Servon 2009; Bates 2006; Currid 2007). This requires the orientation of local planners and policy-makers to go beyond the current focus of large-scale development to include small-scale neighborhood-based strategies.

Traditional approaches largely ignore the role of community organizations and resident involvement in revitalization, yet, as Porter (1995) notes, connecting neighborhood residents and businesses with the regional economy leverages a significant competitive advantage. The literature finds urban commercial districts to be uniquely positioned to access larger regional markets and industries, resulting in greater employment opportunities and business growth, but in practice few revitalization efforts recognize the potential of neighborhoods to impact the regional economy (Porter 1995; Carr and Servon 2009; Bates 2006, Seidman 2005).

Central Place Theory- Regional Integration

Some have argued that the neighborhood is not a significant unit for economic development initiatives based on the regional nature of economies and the assumption that small businesses
have little potential for spurring economic growth (Seidman 2005; Bates 2006). However, recent literature increasingly recognizes neighborhoods and commercial corridors as important pieces of the local economy that deserve the attention of policy makers (Carr and Servon 2009; Bates 2006).

Intrinsic to this discussion is the theory of central places, which explains the hierarchy of the regional economy. It is based on the familiar assumption of agglomeration economies, but is applied most readily to the location of retail activities (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010). Central place theory asserts that each urban area, or central place, is supported by a hierarchy of surrounding centers of population that provide resources and customers to the central city. In a city, individual neighborhoods have small centers of convenience goods that support the immediate residential market while the urban core may offer more specialized goods, services and entertainment options. Notably, the demographic shifts and advances in transportation post-World War II has altered the traditional structure of the urban hierarchy, essentially flattening it by pulling activity away from smaller commercial nodes and concentrating it in shopping centers dominated by large chain stores, often located in the suburbs (Blakely and Green Leigh 2010). The literature notes this changing retail environment as a significant and continuing challenge to urban commercial revitalization (Nelson, Burby, Feser, Dawkins, Malizia and Quercia 2004; Padilla and Eastlick 2008; Weisbrod and Pollakowski 1984, Nation Trust Main Street Center 2009).

While the growth of major retailers, “big-box” stores or “category killers”, poses a challenge to urban commercial districts, the literature suggests there is also an opportunity to create synergy
with large anchor businesses and cater to niche markets unmet by large stores, specifically ethnic and racial minority markets (Seidman 2005; Ferguson 2005; Padilla and Eastlick 2008; Bates 2006; Porter 1995). The Main Street approach incorporates this opportunity in its methodology, as “Main Streets generally have more independent businesses than national retailers. Independent businesses usually invest more of their profits back into the community” (National Trust Main Street Center, 2009, p.14). However this methodology does not directly address relationships between neighborhood commercial districts within an urban area as central place theory would suggest (Seidman 2005; Blakely and Green Leigh 2010). Developed originally for the revitalization of singular downtown areas and not neighborhood commercial districts, there is an additional challenge of addressing competition between commercial districts when applying the Four Point Approach to an urban environment.

These theories of location, agglomeration and central place help to explain patterns in economic activity, but do not fully answer the question of why urban areas are struggling. Research shows significant unmet demand in urban areas, with more dollar demand per square mile than in suburban areas and real potential for business creation (Seidman 2005; Bates 2006). Clearly, this phenomenon is not purely economic. The relationships between people and places are complex and cannot be explained by economic rationality alone; other explanations and factors contribute to the continued disinvestment in urban commercial corridors as well (Arefi 2004; Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006; Harrison and Glasmeler 1995). Non-market factors like social ties, cultural identity and community capacity have gained attention as critical components to successful revitalization efforts (de Souza Briggs 1997; Padilla and Eastlick 2009; Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006; Carr and Servon 2009; Arefi 2002). For this reason, an examination of
social theories in revitalizing urban commercial districts is required to gain a more adequate understanding of the context and scope of urban commercial revitalization.

Social Capital and Community Capacity

Beyond the physical and economic aspects of revitalization, or the traditional “place-based” approaches (Seidman 2005; Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006; Arefi 2002), there are important social, political and cultural facets to revitalization that have until recently been under explored in both theory and practice. Recent literature has drawn attention to the idea that the process of how commercial revitalization occurs is as important as what products result (Sutton 2010; Arefi 2002; Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006; Strom 2008). Central to the understanding of these intangible, but essential, elements of community are the theories of social capital and community capacity.

Community Capacity

As defined by Chaskin (2001), community capacity “implies that a community can act in particular ways; it has specific faculties or powers to do certain things” (p.7). Community capacity is noted by a long line of urban revitalization theorists and practitioners as central to reinvigorating a commercial district (Seidman 2005; deSousa Briggs 1997; Sutton 2010; Gale 1991; Bates 1995; Ross and Green Leigh 2000; Bates 2006; Robertson 2003; Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006; Filion, Hoernig, Bunting and Sands 2004; Ferguson 2005).

Arefi (2002) establishes five dimensions of community capacity that are necessary for long-lasting revitalization: resource capacity, organizational capacity, network capacity, programmatic
capacity and political capacity. Resource capacity refers to “the ability to generate and acquire resources” and the “ability to attract, manage and maintain funding” (Arefi 2002 p. 93). Organizational capacity is held in the “management style, skills of staff, size and experience” of the implementing organization (Arefi 2002 p. 92). Network capacity refers to working within and outside the community, implying an ability to leverage internal and external relationships for the benefit of the district (Arefi 2002). Programmatic capacity is evidenced in the project management of revitalization efforts, specifically the ability to produce short-term visible results as well as develop and maintain long-term activities (Arefi 2002). Political capacity is the degree of elected official involvement and level of support in the decision-making process, which has been identified in the literature as a significant condition for long-term impact (Arefi 2002; Seidman 2005; Padilla and Eastlick 2008).

The success of the Main Street Approach requires a level of community capacity in that “community residents have a strong emotional, social and civic connection and are motivated to get involved and make a difference” (National Trust Main Street Center 2009, p. 11). However, many cite the observed lack of community capacity in America’s urban areas as a critical reason for the failure of decades of revitalization attempts to take hold (Sutton 2005; deSouza Briggs 1997; Seidman 2005; Robertson 1995, 1999, 2004). To begin to understand the complex social structures within a community that do or do not exhibit the five types of community capacity, the literature presents the theory of social capital (deSousa Briggs 1997; Arefi 2002).
Social Capital

Social capital refers to “the resources stored in human relationships” (deSouza Briggs 1997, p. 111). DeSouza Briggs notes that “[b]usinesses have never thrived, nor have economies flourished, without social capital” (p. 111). As Light (2004) describes, these “relationships of trust” (p. 146) allow for beneficial actions through a reliance on community norms. He presents the example of jewelers in Amsterdam who regularly transfer valuable packets of cut diamonds to one another without any prior inventory; because there is trust that the social norm of not stealing will be upheld. In this way, social capital, in the form of community norms, relationships and networks, supports the development of other types of capital – physical, financial, human and cultural (Hutchinson and Vidal 2004; Arefi 2002; McDonald 2010). As Light (2004) describes, the nexus of opportunity in social capital is its uniquely democratic availability as a “nonmonetized resource that metamorphoses into money, property, education, and high culture” (Light 2004, p. 150).

Social capital has been found to be critical in a wide range of activities that relate to an individual’s quality of life – job opportunities, business success, educational attainment, physical health and community safety (Light 2004; de Souza Briggs 1997; McDonald 2011; Arefi 2002; Granovetter 1985). For example, in neighborhoods where residents have more organizational memberships, there is a lower occurrence of long-term unemployment (Light 2004). It is the ability to transmute social capital into other forms of capital that makes it so valuable in community development. It is the core resource upon which community prosperity can be built when there is little financial or physical capital (Hutchinson and Vidal 2004).
Broadly, social capital is used by individuals for two reasons: “to get by”, or for day-to-day social support; and “to get ahead”, or leverage networks for advancement (de Souza Briggs 1997). The use of social networks for leverage has important implications for revitalizing economically distressed, socially isolated and geographically segregated urban neighborhoods. De Souza (2004) questions the accessibility of valuable social capital, stating that “not all social ties are created equal” (p.152), and that having connections to neighbors who are similarly disconnected from the job market presents little potential for advancement. Therefore, community building efforts must not only facilitate connections within neighborhoods, but also connect neighbors to those outside of their community (de Souza Briggs 2004; McDonald 2011).

The literature defines these two forms of social connections as bonding capital and bridging capital (Arefi 2002; de Souza Briggs 2004). Bonding capital is what forms the interpersonal ties within a group or community, and is required for working collectively (Arefi 2002; deSousa Briggs 1997). Bridging capital is what connects groups to the larger community, it is the networks, relationships and connections from one group to another that allow collaboration (Arefi 2002; deSousa Briggs 1997; Innes and Booher 1995). Both bonding and bridging capital are necessary for effectively tackling revitalization (Arefi 2002; deSousa Briggs 1997; Foster-Fishman, Fitzgerald, Brandell, Nowell, Chavis and Egren 2006).

Social capital, however, is not a cure-all. The literature highlights the role of social capital as a piece of successful efforts, but notes there is an inherent element of exclusion in the definition and development of “community” (de Souza Briggs 2004; McDonald 2011). In order to fully understand the development and use of this powerful resource, there must be recognition of the
“ways in which culture and class tend to organize and limit the meanings of community” (de Souza Briggs 2004, p. 153). In particular, the literature highlights the growing demographic and cultural diversity of neighborhoods as a source of potential conflict that requires a purposeful attention to community social cohesion and power relations (Arefi 2002; de Souza Briggs 2004; Putnam 2009).

Social Capital and Diversity

The impact of diversity on social cohesion and solidarity has gained much attention in the literature. Putnam (2007) describes “the increase in social and ethnic heterogeneity” (p. 137) as one of the greatest challenges as well as one of the most significant opportunities facing communities today. The challenge of increasing diversity is that it heightens “us-against-them” inter-ethnic/inter-racial relations and lowers social trust over all, even among those in the same ethnic/racial group (Kilson 2009; Putnam 2007). Following this “conflict theory” of diversity, the literature shows that increased diversity presents the threat of dividing a community by weakening the bridging ties that are needed for collaboration (Putnam 2007; de Souza Briggs 2004; Arefi 2002). However, when communities can build relationships between groups and create “new, more encompassing identities” (Putnam 2007, p. 138) then social solidarity is strengthened and the benefits of a diverse population can be realized, including increased creativity and economic growth (Putnam 2007).

The literature highlights the unique role that planners and others involved in revitalization can play in strengthening these linking bonds by building community trust and networks while improving the built environment. Indeed, the literature examining the effects of revitalization on
social capital offers a key lesson: strategies that target physical improvements alone and ignore the rich social context of communities can create greater divides and fragmentation and weaken capacity for revitalization efforts (Arefi 2002; de Souza Briggs 1997; Innes and Booher 1995). Arefi (2002) provides a critical example of this in the effects of Urban Renewal policies on low-income communities across the country. To address the challenges of diversity and identify new solutions to persistent poverty, those involved in revitalization must actively work to connect disparate groups and build a meaningful shared identity (de Souza Briggs 2004; Arefi 2002).

**Political Realities**

*The Political Structure of Urban Commercial Revitalization*

In the aftermath of drastic population and economic decline, the context from which early revitalization policies arose, local governments were widely viewed as incapable of reinvigorating cities, seen instead as being burdensome, unresponsive and inefficient (Morgan and Pelissero 1980; Hula et al 1997, Porter 1995). Hamstrung by monetary constraints and facing continued cynicism around the perceived shortsightedness of local politics, many cities contracted out revitalization activities, forming public-private partnerships and quasi government agencies. Due to lack of faith in local governments, this structure for economic revitalization was adopted by cities across the nation. However, these resulting organizations have been criticized for being non-transparent and unfairly reinforcing the interests of economic elites who were often directly involved in these organizations (Hula et al 1997). As Cohen (2007) describes, “the age of urban renewal gave deep public roots to the flowering of private capital in the realm of commerce” (p. 94).
Although this structure for redevelopment efforts still exists in most cities, it is no longer politically acceptable for revitalization to be solely a partnership between the local government and the business community. Citizens are requiring greater involvement and wider benefit, particularly low-income residents and minorities (Hula et al 1997). The numerous attempts at revitalization over the decades have engendered a deep sense of pessimism, placing an enormous burden of proof on any institution engaging in revitalization activities. There is often an expectation of these groups to do what “government, community groups, and corporations alone have failed to do” (Hula et al 1997, p. 483). Facing a harsh political climate, local governments and their private partners must demonstrate that new efforts are focused on community-level change and not the enrichment of elite business interests. This change in discourse has important implications for citywide Main Streets, which operate in the delicate intersection of local politics and community development.

*The Need for Political Capital and Capacity*

Navigating this environment requires a high level of political capital and capacity, which Servon and Glickman (1998) define as the ability to effectively advocate on behalf of constituents as well as mobilize support and negotiate benefit. Personal relationships, political will and electoral politics add an element to commercial revitalization that is uniquely human and correspondingly unpredictable. In order for commercial revitalization activities to be successful at the local level, political and bureaucratic commitment must be attained as the resources, funding, and implementation of commercial revitalization strategies are often shouldered, at least in part, by government entities (Robertson 2003; Siedman 2005; Goldstein, Mister and Ross 1977;
Glickman and Servon 1998; Arefi 2002). For example, elected officials oversee community services for neighborhoods such as policing, trash collection and transportation which all directly relate to their vitality (Arefi 2002). As the National Trust Main Street Center (2009) suggests, “[p]olitical support from elected officials and city staff is critical to success, but sometimes difficult to attain,” (p. 13).

Innes and Gruber (2005) offer great insight into the human aspect of politics in planning in their article on planning styles in conflict. In describing the political influence style they note, “a [political] leader works with players on a one-on-one basis, keeping them personally attached by offering them specific benefits to co-opt them into supporting the leader’s agenda.” (p. 181). This develops a system where those who support the particular political agenda of the administration benefit.

Political relationships are necessary for implementation of commercial revitalization strategies, but the loyalty required often leaves important programmatic capacities susceptible to changing political tides. As Hula et al (1997) assert, to affect the long-term social and economic change required for successful revitalization, organizations engaged in these activities must develop positive working relationships within the local political system but guard against “co-optation, coercion, and isolation by political forces” (p. 483).

The issue of affecting long-term social and economic change in the midst of a political system that rewards short-term actions is a significant hindrance to urban commercial revitalization (Hula et al 1997). The literature suggests that organizations must develop a buffer from political
fallout to be successful in revitalizing urban areas (Hula et al 1997; Arefi 2002). Operating in this often unpredictable and changing political environment requires that citywide Main Street Programs be both advocates for pro-Main Street policies and funding while being ready to handle the pressures associated with political change (Forrester 1989; National Trust Main Street Center 2009). Broad-based community support as well as a high level of political capacity is required to operate sustained efforts that can withstand local political shifts (Hula et al 1997; Glickman and Servon 1998; Cohen 2007).

In response to the fickle nature of government operations, municipal reforms in the 1960s and 1970s sought to replace the political machine with “good government devices”, namely the introduction of a city manager, at-large elections and non-partisan ballots (Morgan and Pelissero 1980, p. 999). These reforms were motivated by a desire to minimize partisanship and encourage community-wide spending; however Morgan and Pelissero’s (1980) interrupted time-series study of local government policy decisions found no difference in the fiscal policies of reformed governments. This suggests that it is the micro interactions of local political players rather than the larger structure of local governments that influence resource distribution and program creation (deSouza Briggs 1998; Forester 1988).

Indeed, Hula et al (1997) argue that reform of local policies must happen outside of the local government structure, with broad-based community coalitions serving as a vehicle for the restructuring of existing policy subsystems and local policy agendas. This might present challenges for citywide Main Street programs that are tied to the local government, as the
literature suggests that the long-term policy changes necessary for revitalization are created by conflict, something an internal component of government might not be able to provide.

**Opportunities in Urban Commercial Revitalization**

Together, the social, economic and political characteristics of urban communities shape the unique opportunities facing citywide Main Street coordinating programs. Overwhelmingly, the literature calls for urban revitalization strategies that authentically identify and leverage the unique strengths, character and culture of urban commercial areas. As a comprehensive, incremental and grass-roots approach, the Main Street methodology is in line with these recommendations found in the literature. However, case study research will identify the practical realities of this model in urban communities. From the preceding discussion of the literature, eight significant opportunities in revitalizing urban commercial districts emerge. These are numbered and listed below.

1) *Strategic location near the city center* (Porter 1995)

Despite the post-highway sprawl of development, cities remain important hubs of transportation, infrastructure, business, entertainment and culture and in fact are beginning to see a reversal in trends of decline (Porter 1995; Padilla and Eastlick 2008; Carr and Servon 2009). Recent data show that population is returning to the city, with urban growth outpacing national growth, at 12.1% compared to 9.7%, over the past ten years (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Located in areas accessible to the core of downtown, urban commercial corridors have a distinct economic advantage, offering access to downtown business districts, logistical infrastructure, financial resources and cultural amenities as well as a greater pool of employees, residents and visitors. As
Porter (1995) notes, this proximity offers a competitive edge for businesses, making urban commercial districts attractive to a range of business types that benefit from access to urban markets. Building on this strategic advantage can expand the opportunities for business development in urban commercial districts (Bates 2006; Porter 1997).

2) Local market demand (Porter 1995)

Urban markets represent significant unmet demand (Seidman 2005; Porter 1995; Bellinger and Wang 2011). Many researchers have documented the phenomenon of urban retail deserts, particularly in low-income, minority neighborhoods. The high population density of urban neighborhoods compensates for lower per-capita incomes, often representing greater dollar demand per square mile than sprawling suburban neighborhoods (Seidman 2005). The literature recognizes urban retailing as a growing market, with urban consumers representing a major growth segment in the coming decades. The concentration of customers and lack of competitors presents an opportunity for the development of local businesses, particularly those that can meet a demand unmet by chain retailers (Porter 1995; Seidman 2005). As Porter (1995) explains, a neighborhood supermarket that understands the local market conditions is in more competitive position, as it can provide a better product mix geared toward local preferences more efficiently than a large retailer could.
3) Specialized markets and an opportunity for minority entrepreneurship (Porter 1995; Seidman 2005; Bates 2010)

Urban districts are often more ethnically and culturally diverse than their suburban counterparts, presenting an opportunity to leverage these strong and weak social ties for business development, job creation and customer attraction (Bates 2006; Carr and Servon 2009). Immigration trends and the growth of ethnic enclaves play an important role in renewing economic vitality in areas of persistent disinvestment (Loukaitou-Sideris and Hutchinson 2006).

Access to specialized ethnic markets supports minority business development and can improve access to employment opportunities, as minority businesses owners have been shown to hire minority employees (Bates 2006). Combined with policies that encourage investment and lending in low-income areas, urban districts with a wealth of cultural, ethnic and racial diversity have the unique opportunity to promote minority entrepreneurship that can benefit residents and fuel economic growth.

4) Integration with the regional economy (Porter 1995; Seidman 2005)

The agglomeration of business and economic activity around urban areas provides the distinct advantage of easy access to regional clusters. Porter (1997) argues that access to these “unique concentrations of competitive companies in related fields” (p.13) enhances the long-term economic development opportunities of cities. Urban commercial districts can both support and benefit from regional economic strengths. By supplying goods and services to these business clusters, neighborhood businesses can be a key piece of a competitive regional strategy.
Integrating local business development efforts with a regional strategy can help launch small businesses into larger markets that would otherwise be unattainable (Porter 1995).

5) Untapped human capital (Porter 1995; Johnson 2002; Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006)
The residents of urban neighborhoods represent perhaps the greatest opportunity for urban commercial revitalization, as many researchers present resident involvement and ownership as the central factor in the success of revitalization efforts (Arefi 2002; Carr and Servon 2009) Although often ignored in government efforts, the literature shows people-based strategies to be effective at building the social networks needed to support overall community health and economic vitality.

6) Vernacular culture (Carr and Servon 2009)
Urban neighborhoods have rich cultural and historical assets that make them distinct places. Building a revitalization strategy that is based in local culture and unique neighborhood flavor can fuel economic growth, stimulate business activity and investment and help create a unique neighborhood identity that draws people to the neighborhood as a destination of culture and commerce (Carr and Servon 2009; Seidman 2005; Bates 2006).

7) Community-based organizations (Harrison and Glasmeler 1995)
Porter’s (1995) notable discussion of the competitive advantages of the inner-city placed community organizations in a subordinate role to private business in the revitalization of urban areas, but numerous scholars since have elevated the role of community-based organizations to that of critical facilitators in the development of neighborhood social, political and economic
capital. Carr and Servon (2009) argue that “community-based organizations have been extremely proactive shapers of urban space” (p.338), able to implement locally appropriate strategies ranging from bi-lingual entrepreneurship development classes to the purchase of vacant land. Community-based organizations are invaluable partners in urban revitalization, helping to balance the “attraction of commerce with the preservation of culture” (Carr and Servon 2009, p. 338).

8) Local government programs (Harrison and Glasmeler 1995)

Whether the goal is to increase local tax revenues or improve the quality of life for residents, local governments are invested in urban revitalization. The multiplicity of existing programs is an important source of support for revitalization efforts that could not be delivered by any other organization. With recent research showing the effectiveness of asset oriented strategies, there is a significant opportunity to build on existing programs and policies to incorporate neighborhood scale and people-based strategies that leverage the assets held in residents and community-based organizations.

Challenges in Urban Commercial Revitalization

Furthermore, the literature identifies the following seven unique challenges that must be overcome to successfully reinvigorate urban commercial areas. While this discussion identifies these elements as challenges, they present opportunities for strengthening the practice of urban commercial revitalization.
1) Poor perception of urban districts and surrounding neighborhoods (Seidman 2005)

Real and perceived crime, a rundown physical environment, homelessness and poverty in urban neighborhoods are simultaneously compelling reasons for urban revitalization and significant obstacles to achieving it. The view of urban areas as centers of criminal activity persists, and the vacant sites, underutilized buildings and empty storefronts present in so many urban neighborhoods creates a negative image of the city for visitors and potential customers.

2) Costly regulatory environment (Seidman 2005; Porter 1995; Gale 1991)

The literature cites the costs of operating a business in urban areas as higher than in areas outside of the city due to a more highly regulated business environment (Seidman 2005). Higher city tax, utility and insurance rates; the need for private security; and the cost of building rehabilitation or construction can all add to the operating costs of a business. However, the literature shows that addressing this factor alone will not reverse decline.

3) Decaying physical condition

As cities lost their population and business base to surrounding localities, dwindling tax receipts resulted in a fiscal crisis for many urban areas and the loss of capacity to maintain community services and infrastructure (Seidman 2005; Porter 1995; Padilla and Eastlick 2008). The condition of the physical environment is cited as a challenge for urban revitalization, but the literature clearly shows that focusing on physical aspects alone has not resulted in reinvestment. Successful urban commercial efforts must address the built environment in the context of a neighborhood strategy.
4) Retail environment in transition (Padilla and Eastlick 2009; Ferguson 2005; Nelson, Burby, Feser, Dawkins, Malizia and Quercia 2004)

Recent advances in transportation and communication technologies have extended the sphere of competition for businesses. While downtown districts used to serve a predominantly local customer base, today’s increasingly mobile shopper can choose from regional, national, or global markets. With competition from suburban development, big box stores and online retailing, urban businesses are faced with the challenge of finding their place in the market. In a desire to compete with suburban malls, urban revitalization strategies often focus on recruiting chain stores to a district, but these may not be appropriate as they can threaten the distinct character of urban neighborhoods. Padilla and Eastlick (2008) find that successful revitalization of urban retail requires there be a connection between commercial districts and social activity. Ferguson (2005), Sutton (2010) and Arefi (2002) all note that strategies for developing a thriving commercial environment must be integrated with neighborhood initiatives that build the essential social and political capital which ultimately influences the economic cohesion of the district. The literature resoundingly rejects Porter’s (1997) assertion that private business alone will revitalize struggling urban areas and calls for a true embrace of the mixed-use nature of urban districts as natural centers of commerce and community life.

5) Limited social capital and community capacity

The level of social capital and community capacity is linked strongly to the success of revitalization efforts. However, urban neighborhoods are often lacking in capacity and weak in social and political capital. The ethnic and racial diversity common to urban neighborhoods presents challenges for the leveraging of social capital, as disparate groups may coexist but share
little understanding of a common identity (de Souza Briggs 2004; Putnam 2007). Furthermore, many urban communities have low engagement from citizens, a serious problem when resident ownership and community leadership is noted as key to revitalization (Foster-Fishman et al 2006). There is a need for collaboration among stakeholders, commitment of local institutions and organizations, and effective partnerships with city government for successful revitalization (Seidman 2005; de Souza Briggs 1997; Sutton 2010; Gale 1991; Bates 1995; Ross and Green Leigh 2000; Bates 2006; Robertson 2003; Lamore, Link and Blackmond 2006; Filion, Hoernig, Bunting and Sands 2004).

6) Limited access to financial capital (Bates 2006, 2010; Seidman 2005)
Bates (2006), Seidman (2005) and Porter (1995) all argue that a lack of access to financial capital is the most significant challenge to revitalization and economic development. Bates describes three impacts of limited capital: (1) the “discouraged entrepreneur” - some businesses never get started because they cannot obtain the necessary capital; (2) limited business growth - capitalization at start-up affects business size; and (3) Shortened business lifespan - undercapitalized businesses usually close after a few years of operation. Minority businesses in particular have difficulty accessing capital, having to rely on consumer forms of debt, usually credit cards (Bates 2006). With fewer personal assets to invest and fewer personal networks that could provide financial support, entrepreneurs in low- and moderate- income neighborhoods face an increased likelihood of failure without access to start-up capital (Seidman 2005). The literature suggests that lending to urban entrepreneurs is profitable and that Community
Development Finance Institutions, as well as other partners such as the Small Business Administration, can help improve access to capital.


The literature shows racial inequality to be a persistent barrier to revitalization. Ross and Green Leigh (2000) suggest that without an explicit discussion of the influence of racism, revitalization strategies will be doomed to fail. Effective strategies must acknowledge the institutional barriers to revitalization that exist in minority communities that are not present in White communities. Bates (2010) found that race is a barrier to accessing capital, with African American loan applicants 25% more likely to have loans denied than White applicants with the same credit worthiness. Bellinger and Wang (2011) showed that the availability of retail is associated strongly with race, with African American communities systematically disconnected from services, particularly grocery stores. Bates also documented barriers to employment, finding that White-owned firms hire White employees even when located in a neighborhood with a high percentage of minority residents. Unless all the players in urban revitalization address this structural racism, cities will never reach their full potential as an integral part of regional economy (Ross and Green Leigh 2000).

The Need for Research on the Citywide Main Street Approach

Developed in 1977, through the National Trust for Historic Preservation in response to the widespread decline of historic business districts the comprehensive and incremental Main Street Approach to commercial revitalization has proven successful in communities across the United
The National Trust Main Street Center was established in 1980 and more than 1,000 communities are currently applying the commercial revitalization approach. The National Trust Main Street Center (2009) cites three major reasons for commercial district decline that led to the development and implementation of their unique Main Street Approach to commercial revitalization:

- The creation of the interstate highway system that transformed the ways in which Americans lived;
- The establishment of land-use regulations which separated residential areas from commercial areas, effectively “outlawing” the kind of mixed-use development found along Main Streets; and most importantly,
- The almost three-fold explosion of retail space between 1960 and 2000 - from four square feet of retail space per capita to 38, flooding the market with far more commercial space than American spending could support. (p. 8)

The Main Street Approach has been most widely applied in rural downtown districts where non-profit organizations tasked with applying the approach are in charge of organizing commercial revitalization activities in partnership with local governments (Robertson, 2003; National Trust Main Street Center, 2009). As Robertson (2003) describes, the Main Street Approach is flexible, fluid and inextricably tied to local governments for implementation.

A number of different strategies have been developed to address the continued disinvestment in urban commercial districts. The literature identifies strategies that mix place- and people-based
approaches to be most effective (Seidman 2005; LaMore, Link and Blackmond 2006). Place-based strategies focus solely on improving the built environment and physical infrastructure of an area, while people-based strategies center on enhancing individuals’ quality of life and expanding access to economic opportunities and housing options (Seidman 2005). The people-versus-place debate has been a contentious topic in the revitalization literature for many decades, but as Lamore et al (2006) suggest, the traditional choice of one approach over the other is ineffective. Successful revitalization efforts employ comprehensive strategies that incorporate revitalization of the built environment in combination with human and social capital development (Seidman 2005; Lamore et al 2006; Arefi 2002; Sutton 2010).

Currently, the Main Street model offers the most balanced approach to the social and economic aspects central to revitalization (Robertson 2007), but previous research by Robertson (2003, 2004, 2007) and Seidman (2003, 2005), the premier scholars on the Main Street Approach, has identified a need for further investigation of applying the concept in an urban environment. Robertson (2003, 2004, 2007) and Seidman (2003, 2005) have deconstructed and evaluated the Main Street Approach by utilizing case studies and conducting empirical research; both often highlight the need for further research into this approach.

Robertson has been analyzing the Main Street Program since the mid-1990s. His thorough assessment of 16 downtown development strategies for small downtowns concluded that the Main Street Approach was both the most successful and most comprehensive tool currently in use (1999). His follow-up work, “intended to fill the large void in the literature,” (2004, p. 56) examined the application of the Four Points of the Main Street Approach in practice. Robertson
surveyed 40 small town Main Street communities and then did an in-depth case study on four of the programs through site visits and interviews to answer the following research questions: Do communities use the four elements of the Main Street Approach equally, or are certain elements emphasized more? What factors contribute to one element being used more than another? Do size of a city, distance from larger city, or length of time in program impact how the four-point program is used? (p.56). He found that promotion was the most often used of the four points over all and that smaller and newer cities focused more on organization. His research highlighted the importance of public/private partnerships by showing that a majority of those surveyed relied on some funding from their local governments (2004).

Seidman is still in the process of conducting research on the use of the Main Street Approach to revitalize inner-city business districts. His broad outline and descriptions of best practices for inner-city commercial revitalization suggest many areas where the Main Street Approach may falter, specifically, in dealing with crime, workforce development, poverty, race and ethnicity (2005, pp. 48-50). While he draws connections to the Main Street Model being applied in inner-city commercial districts, Seidman does not specifically focus on the five, currently functioning, citywide coordinating Main Street programs, nor address how the unique challenges and opportunities afforded by the urban environment play out in practice. Because of this gap in the literature, my thesis will seek to answer the following research question:

What unique challenges and opportunities do citywide Main Street Programs face because of their urban environments, coordinated structures, and political realities?
Research Objectives

Research into the processes and practices of citywide Main Street Programs has yet to be conducted in the field of Urban and Regional Planning. Theories of collaborative and communicative planning assist in the identification of diverse stakeholders involved in the citywide Main Street processes in each city. As William Peterman (2004) notes, “planning collaboratively for a place, neighborhood or community involves coordinated and cooperative efforts by a variety of individuals or organizations each having an interest or stake, often widely varying, in issues, policies or programs.” (p. 271). Communicative theory underlies the value of multiple different types of information and ‘ways of knowing’ that exist in any process (Innes and Booher, 1999). Gaining multiple perspectives regarding the implementation of citywide Main Street approaches will enhance the understanding of these programs and the unique challenges they face. This thesis will address the following two broad questions:

- What challenges and opportunities to the application of the Four Points Approach exist in citywide Main Street Programs because of their urban environments, coordinated structures and political realities?
- What role do citywide Main Street Programs serve in the urban context of commercial revitalization?

The intricacies of urban commercial revitalization, outlined in Chapter II, that are due to complex economic, social and political conditions beg more detailed inquiry into specific aspects
of citywide Main Street Programs as well. The following five more nuanced questions will help assess these intricacies identified in the existent literature:

1. What additions to the Four Point Approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities to urban commercial revitalization?

2. Do citywide Main Street Programs adequately address poverty, disinvestment and crime?

3. Would citywide Main Street Programs better serve their districts and city needs if they were not connected to city government?

4. How can citywide Main Street Programs grow/expand to include cultural enclaves and ethnically unique business districts in their cities?

5. Is there space in the Main Street Approach to add a capacity building step before the initial application of the Four Points Approach so as to be inclusive of long-struggling minority commercial districts?

Based on the commercial revitalization literature, the additions to the Four Point Approach may center on crime, safety and sustainability as these issues are not explicitly addressed in the current definitions. The context for poverty, disinvestment and crime in an urban environment may be included in the application of the citywide Main Street Approach but most likely falls outside of how the programs were initially designed and are currently run. The inclusion of minority communities and cultural enclaves in the coordinated structure of citywide Main Street programs, as the literature suggests, may have just begun to arise as part of the context of this economic development and historic preservation strategy. The discussion of further capacity building efforts and preparatory steps to applying the Four Points approach will likely include data on both vernacular culture and minority enclaves, as the literature suggests challenges to
community capacity in these groups especially. The data collected will determine if the thematic answers to these questions fit back into the larger context of the hypothesis.
CHAPTER III: Methods

Introduction

Citywide Main Street Programs take a unique approach to urban commercial revitalization based on the longstanding tradition of the Four Points Approach. While statewide coordinated programs have functioned in large cities for more than three decades, autonomous independent urban coordinated programs began in 1995 in Boston and are, as of now, only operating in five cities. Empirical investigation into the five existing citywide programs in Boston, MA; Baltimore, MD; Washington, DC; Orlando, FL and Portland, OR has yet to be conducted to address the objectives outlined in the previous chapter.

Specifically, the connections between the factors of the urban environment, coordinated structure, and political realities to the application of the Four Points Approach have not been investigated. In order to fill this void in the literature and provide insight into the continued application, proliferation and promotion of this commercial revitalization methodology and approach, new qualitative and quantitative analyses are required. This methodology chapter outlines the research strategy for this study, provides an overview of data collection techniques, explains the framework for data analysis and discusses limitations and potential problems encountered in this research.

Research Strategy

To investigate the unique attributes associated with citywide Main Street Programs, case studies of each of the five programs were prepared. Case studies are empirical inquiries that investigate
contemporary phenomena within a real-life context (Yin, 2003). The five currently existing
citywide Main Street Programs studied in depth for this thesis are: Boston, MA; Baltimore, MD;
Washington, DC; Orlando, FL; Portland, OR. These programs were selected for examination
because of their ongoing use of the Main Street Approach as an urban commercial revitalization
strategy in adherence to the National Trust Main Street Center’s Four Points Approach. A
detailed description and background of each of these programs can be found in Chapter IV:
Results.

Both quantitative and qualitative strategies of data collection were utilized in order to maintain
balance and provide a fullness of context and comparative analysis in the case study programs.

**Data Collection**

To understand the context of each of these programs, quantitative data collection and analysis
was sought to provide both a frame and a source of triangulation for each of the study
communities. Examining the statistical data from the US Census, the Corporation for National
and Community Service (2010), and specific program annual reports provides a consistent
context through which to compare the strategies, challenges and implementation efforts of these
five unique city programs. These baseline data are used to frame qualitative data collection and
provide a source of reference for emergent themes in the urban context.

Each of the citywide programs, while maintaining the same Four Point Approach and abiding by
the same eight principles, exhibits unique characteristics based on the realities of the city in
which it operates. Qualitative data for each of these programs, collected through half hour semi-
structured interviews with program administrators in each of these cities, assist in developing the fullness of thoughts and ideas in relation to both the research objectives and the gaps in current urban commercial revitalization literature. Interviewees were selected specifically because of their role in a citywide Main Street Program. The interview request protocol and Institution Review Board approved questions can be found in Appendix A.

As Elizabeth O’Sullivan and her colleagues (2008) note, “Interviews help program evaluators to learn about the background of the program, its objectives, its processes, its accomplishments and its failures” (p. 194). The specific type of interviewing conducted was responsive, meaning that the interviewer could change the questions and their ordering depending on the responses received (O’Sullivan, et. al, 2008). This more conversational type of interviewing allowed themes to develop and be followed-up on throughout the interviews with citywide Main Street practitioners.

Four interviews were conducted via telephone to gather qualitative insight into the five citywide Main Street Programs. Private rooms were reserved in the Virginia Commonwealth University Library from which to make the calls. Participants were sent an email prior to the interview with IRB confidentiality information and information regarding the purpose the study. Upon the start of the interviews, participants were notified that a digital recording device would be used to record their responses and assist in transcription of the interviews. Participants were free to discontinue the interview at anytime and were able to skip any question they did not want to answer.
To start understanding citywide Main Street Programs, practitioners were contacted about a year before the formal interview process commenced for informal conversations on how their organizations operated, what types of realities they faced on a daily basis and what types of direction they could offer in terms of research materials. Through these informal conversations and through an expansive review of the literature, the “general follow-up questions” as signified on the interview instrument (See Appendix A) emerged as the crux of this endeavor to understand the intricacies and realities of citywide Main Street Programs. These five questions are as follows:

1. What additions to the Four Point Approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities to urban commercial revitalization?
2. Do citywide Main Street Programs adequately address poverty, disinvestment and crime?
3. Would citywide Main Street Programs better serve their districts and city needs if they were not connected to city government?
4. How can citywide Main Street Programs grow/expand to include cultural enclaves and ethnically unique business districts in their cities?
5. Is there space in the Main Street Approach to add a capacity building step before the initial application of the Four Points Approach so as to be inclusive of long-struggling minority commercial districts?

Through these five questions and the free flowing discussion that developed, participants were asked for their perspectives on how the urban environment, the coordinated structure and political realities effect the citywide Main Street Program they are involved with. The richness
of the interviews, the nuances captured in voice, and emergent themes help to give relevant context to the evolution of the citywide Main Street Approach from the perspective of practitioners and provided abundant data for the discussion section of this paper.

**Framework for Data Analysis**

Quantitative data for each of the citywide Main Street Programs in the form of area demographics, annual reports and volunteerism were collected, tabulated, and compared across the five cities. Charts and maps based on these data assist in framing the discussion chapter of this thesis and providing context to the qualitative data collected through the interview process. Descriptive reporting of the relevant statistical information frames the context of Chapter IV: Results.

To assist in focusing the interviews on the research objectives and ease the process of qualitative analysis, the interviews were structured according to the main themes developed by identifying the gaps in the literature. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, qualitative data in the form of interviews require a level of processing before they can be utilized to its full potential; the words of interviewees are themselves the data to be analyzed. First, each digitally recorded interview was transcribed into a Word document. Then, to facilitate the content analysis of transcribed interviews and creatively capture the prominence potential themes, Tagxedo, a free online word cloud generator was employed. As the Tagxedo website states, the application turns text into a “word cloud, words individually sized appropriately to highlight the frequencies of occurrence within the body of text” (Tagxedo 2012). After this creative exercise was complete, a more thorough analytical coding process was undertaken.
An inductive list of codes based on the most prominent thematic words present in the interviews was created. Questions were thematically structured to begin with, thus the final codes are the product of a refined “start list” and an inductive process based on two detailed readings of the transcripts (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 58). The following thematic codes guided the data analysis process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description/Theme</th>
<th>Secondary Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Environment</td>
<td>UE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UE: Density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UE-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UE-Di</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UE-Sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UE-C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UE-Su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UE-MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating Structure</td>
<td>CS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-Ca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-De</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-Co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-Su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Realities</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR-CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR-BD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR-FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR-Su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR-MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Points</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FP-O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FR-ER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FP-D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FP-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FP-A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Coding Schema for Transcription of Interviews
The interviews were coded based on common themes that emerged under each thematic segment of questioning using the codes above. Each transcript was coded twice during two separate readings. In this study, it is not just the number of times words are mentioned, but the meaning behind those words that brings richness to the understanding of the Main Street Approach in an urban context. The emergent themes are reported in Chapter IV: Results.

**Limitations and Potential Problems**

While more potential interviewees were contacted, only 4 respondents participated in the interview process - one from each citywide Main Street community except for Washington, DC. Constrained by the IRB approval process, semester deadlines, and busy practitioner schedules, the initially sought 20 interviews could not be conducted as hoped. More perspectives in the qualitative data section would provide greater richness and fullness in theme development. While the sample size for the qualitative data is small, the respondents interviewed have decades of experience as practitioners and their opinions and perspectives on citywide Main Street Programs should be deemed both valid and reliable. Further studies modeled upon this one should seek to interview government employees not directly affiliated with citywide Main Street Programs, program volunteers, program board members, and participating businesses among others involved in the application of the Main Street Approach in an urban context.
CHAPTER IV: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the case studies described in Chapter III: Methodology. The research concentrates on five citywide Main Street programs currently operating in Boston, MA; Baltimore, MD; Washington, DC; Orlando, FL; and Portland, OR. The results seek to unveil the unique challenges and opportunities afforded by the urban environment, coordinated structure and political realities present in citywide Main Street programs. The chapter begins with a demographic overview of each of the five cities and programmatic background for each of the five programs. Maps showing where the Main Street districts are located in comparison to non-white populations are also included for reference. A report of the interview results in each city follows. These data, categorized using the coding schema outlined in the previous chapter, are organized into themes which inform further analysis and synthesis.

Quantitative Inquiry

To provide a context for the environment in which each citywide Main Street is operating, demographic and socio-economic data are used as indicators to capture the challenges and opportunities to commercial revitalization identified in the literature. Summary comparison tables of each of the five program cities are found at the end of the quantitative inquiry section when data for each of the cities are compared.
Case Study Programmatic Snapshots

Boston, Massachusetts

Population and Demographics

With a population of 617,594, Boston is ranked as the 22nd largest city in the U.S. Over the past ten years, the city’s total population grew by 4.8%, which was faster than the rate of growth for the state as a whole, at 3.1% (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

Boston is a diverse city, with more than 46% of its resident population being non-White. While the city has a slight majority of White residents (54%), the state as a whole is over 80% White, meaning racial/ethnic minority groups are over 60% more concentrated in the city. African American or Black residents represent 24% of the population in Boston, compared to only 6.6% in the state. Asians make up 9% of Boston’s population, compared to only 5% of Massachusetts population. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin also represent a larger share of the city’s population than the state’s, 17.5% in the city compared to 9.6% in the state (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).
Economic Vitality

While Boston’s community is diverse, there is a much lower rate of representation in business ownership across minority populations. Overall, racial minorities represent 20% of total business-ownership while they hold a 40% share of the population. Likewise, ethnic minorities own 7% of Boston’s total businesses, but represent 17% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). These disproportionate rates of representation in the community at large and the
business community are well documented in the literature, and present both a challenge and an opportunity.

Boston’s median household income is $50,684, lower than the national average ($51,914) and 27% lower than the statewide average of $64,509 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). More than 21% of Boston’s population falls below the poverty line, while statewide this is only 10% of the population, and 13% nationally.

Engagement and Volunteerism

Engagement and capacity, as measured by citywide volunteer rates, is similar to national rates with an average of 27% of Boston residents volunteering between the years of 2008 and 2010, the same rate as nationally (Corporation for National and Community Service 2010). However, the average number of volunteer hours per resident is 17% lower than the national average, at 29 hours per Boston resident annually compared to 34 hours per U.S. resident annually.

Overall, these statistics provide a context for Boston’s revitalization efforts in terms of the unique social, economic and political factors that are evident in the Boston community. With a population that is significantly more diverse, on average less economically advantaged and slightly lower in civic engagement, Boston faces many of the urban challenges and opportunities that the literature outlines.
Boston Main Streets Program Overview

In 1995, Mayor Thomas M. Menino launched the Boston Main Streets initiative, the first urban, multi-district Main Street Program in the country. The program evolved out of Menino’s earlier involvement in the revitalization of the Roslindale neighborhood using the Four Point Approach in 1983. In three years the Roslindale community saw impressive results. The volunteer-driven organization had helped in the improvement of more than 70 facades, 43 commercial building renovations, the opening of 29 new businesses and creation of 132 jobs. The initiative had leveraged over $5 million in investment in an area previously troubled by blight and disinvestment.

Within a year of its establishment in 1995, Boston Main Streets designated ten neighborhoods following a competitive citywide application process. Over the years the Boston program has continued to grow, adding four districts in both 1997 and 1999, and two more in 2001. Currently there are 19 commercial districts that are part of this citywide Main Street Program.

The program is run through the City of Boston’s Department of Neighborhood Development, through the Office of Business Development. Six full time City of Boston staff assist the managers and executive directors of each district and provide technical assistance related to business development and the Main Street approach. Designated neighborhoods also have access to city architects, design staff, traffic engineers and other technical assistance specialists.

The city provides partial funding for the neighborhoods through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Neighborhood Development Funding (NDF) for those neighborhoods that
do not qualify for CDBG monies. Funding is provided for four broad activities: executive
director salary; storefront improvements through Restore Boston (a facade-improvement
matching grant program administered by the office of Business Development); technical
assistance; and promotion. Each individual district operates as an incorporated 501(c)(3) non-
profit organization with a full-time executive director and committee structure organized under
the Four Points of the Main Street Approach. Neighborhoods are required to raise matching
funds and implement projects based on an annual work plan. Between 1995 and 2010, Boston’s
Main Street districts have helped create 724 net new businesses, 4,763 net new jobs, engage
citizens in 222,064 volunteer hours, and leverage more than $10 million in private investment
(City of Boston 2012).

In 2005, the Boston Main Street Foundation was established to provide further financial and
technical support to Boston’s individual Main Street districts. The Foundation works to develop
renewable income streams for Boston Main Street organizations, build private, public and
corporate support and awareness, and provide funding for Main Street districts. Their current
initiative, Boston Community Change, is a collaboration between the government, non-profit and
business sectors that rewards customers with cash rebates when they make purchases at
participating local businesses. An equal cash amount goes to a non-profit or school of the
customer’s choice, creating a revenue stream for community organizations (Boston Main Streets
Foundation 2012).
Baltimore, Maryland

Population and Demographics

In 2010, Baltimore had a total population of 620,961, making it the 21st largest city in the nation. However, from 2000 to 2010 Baltimore’s population declined by 4.6% while the state as a whole grew by 9%, showing a trend of urban decline (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

Although Maryland has a majority White population (58%), Baltimore is majority African American or Black at 63.7% of total population. This distribution does not reflect the patterns observed among other racial and ethnic minority groups: American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and persons of Hispanic origins feature a greater representation in the state than in the city. For instance, Asians account for 2.3% of Baltimore’s population, but more than 5% of Maryland’s population. Likewise, persons of Hispanic or Latino origin make up 4.2% of the population in Baltimore compared to 8.2% in Maryland (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).
Figure 2.2: Map of Baltimore Main Street Districts and Percent of Non-white Population (US Census 2010)
Economic Vitality

In the business community, African Americans and persons of Hispanic origin are underrepresented, having on average a business ownership rate that is less than half of their population share (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). African American or Black-owned businesses account for only 35% of total firms in Baltimore, or a participation rate that is 54% of their total population proportion. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origins have a business-ownership rate of 2%, representing less than 50% of their share of the population. Asians, the smallest racial minority group in terms of total population, own a disproportionately higher percent of total businesses. While 6% of all businesses are Asian-owned, only 2.3% of the total population is Asian (U.S. Census Bureau 2007).

Indicators of economic health show Baltimore to be struggling, with income and poverty rates that are significantly higher than the state average. Baltimore’s median household income is 80% lower than Maryland’s, at $39,386 compared to $70,674 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). Poverty is also highly concentrated in Baltimore as compared to the state, with more than 20% of the population below the poverty line.

This is more than twice the incidence of poverty across the state, which is less than 9% (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

Engagement and Volunteerism

Engagement and volunteerism in Baltimore is overall higher than national rates. While nationally 27% of people volunteer, 30% of Baltimore residents volunteer. Not only is the volunteer rate
higher in Baltimore, but the average number of hours per volunteer is also greater. Nationally, an average volunteer provides 34 hours of service annually while in Baltimore the average volunteer provides nearly 47 hours of service annually (Corporation for National and Community Service 2010).

**Baltimore Main Streets Program Overview**

Established in 2000, Baltimore Main Streets is the second oldest citywide Main Street program. Presented by the Mayor’s Office as part of an initiative by then Mayor Martin O’Malley, interest in the program began around the neighborhood of Waverly. The neighborhood saw the value in the Four Point Approach and wanted to become a designated Main Street community. Through discussions with the state coordinated program, Main Streets Maryland, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Center, it became apparent that Baltimore could be an urban program, so the program was modeled after Boston’s successful example. The program began with five neighborhoods and has grown to include ten neighborhoods, making it the second largest citywide program (Baltimore Development Corporation 2005).

Baltimore Main Streets is housed in the City of Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), a non-profit organization contracted by the City of Baltimore to undertake economic development activities. Baltimore Main Streets employs four full time staff who provide training, technical assistance and guidance to the ten local districts in implementing the Main Street Approach. The districts are funded in part by the City, primarily with federal CDBG monies, but must obtain financial support from a variety of public and private sources to complete their operating budgets.
From 2000 to 2010, Baltimore Main Streets have helped create 457 net new businesses, 1,184 new full time jobs and 722 part time jobs and leverage $8.6 million in private investment leveraged. For every $1.00 of public funds invested in Baltimore Main Streets, $4.41 is yielded in private investment (Baltimore Development Corporation 2010). Since 2006, Baltimore Main Streets have engaged over 8,000 volunteers, representing 96,026 hours of service with an estimated value of nearly $2 million.

Baltimore is the only city that has been selected twice by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to be the host of the annual National Main Street Conference, once in 2006 and just recently in 2012. The 2012 conference featured for the first time an urban track for the growing class of practitioners employing the Four Point approach in an urban environment.

Washington, DC

Population and Demographics

With a total population of 601,723 in 2010, Washington, D.C. is the 24th largest city in the U.S. Washington, D.C. is growing at a moderate rate. Between 2000 and 2010, the total population grew by 5%, while nationally the population increased by 9%.

Compared to the national average, Washington, D.C. has a large population of minority residents. Minority groups are 55% more represented in D.C. than in the average community. African American residents constitute the largest segment of Washington, D.C.’s population, (51%, compared to the national average of 13%). Notably, 5.7% of the Black population in
D.C. is foreign born, primarily from Ethiopia (23%) and Nigeria (18%) (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The second largest demographic is White (39%). Asians and people of Hispanic origins represent a smaller segment of the city’s population than they do nationally (3.5% and 4.8% compared to 9.1% and 16.3%, respectively).
Figure 2.3: Map of Washington DC Main Street Districts and Percent of Non-white Population

(US Census 2010)
**Economic Vitality**

Although African Americans make up the largest segment of the population, they are proportionally underrepresented in the business community. Only 28% of firms are African American-owned, meaning that African Americans are represented half as much in the business community compare to the community at large. Hispanic business owners are also underrepresented, holding only 6% of total firms. Asians are overrepresented in relation to their percent of the total population, constituting 6% of business ownership and 3.5% of the total population,

Economic indicators show a widening income gap, with higher than average median household incomes as well as higher than average rates of poverty. The median household income for the city is $58,526, which is 13% higher than the national average of $51,914. However, more than 18% of persons in D.C. live below the federal poverty line, while 13% of the national population is in poverty.

**Engagement and Volunteerism**

Engagement and volunteerism in Washington, D.C. is higher than the national average in terms of both average volunteer rate and average number of hours per volunteer. The volunteer rate for the city is 32%, which is 18% higher than the national rate of 27%. Similarly, the average volunteer contributes 30% more hours annually than the national average, at 44 hours per volunteer compared to 34 hours per volunteer nationally.
**D.C. Main Streets Program Overview**

DC Main Streets was established in 2002 and resides in the Washington DC Department of Small and Local Business Development. Eight commercial districts are currently a part of the DC Main Streets coordinated program (Restore D.C. 2012).

**Orlando, Florida**

*Population and Demographics*

Orlando is a mid-sized city that is growing significantly. With a total population in 2010 of 238,000, Orlando has grown by 28% in the last ten years. Overall Orlando is experiencing more growth than the state on a whole, which grew only 18% between 2000 and 2010.

Orlando’s population is majority Non-Hispanic White (57%), while statewide 75% of the population identifies itself as Non-Hispanic White. African Americans represent the second largest segment of the population and are the largest racial minority group (28%), followed by Asians (3.8%). Persons of Hispanic or Latino origins are the largest ethnic minority, representing 25% of the total population. This is more than 56% higher than national average (16%) and 14% higher than the statewide average (22%).
Figure 2.4: Map of Orlando Main Street Districts and Percent of Non-white Population (US Census 2010)
**Economic Vitality**

Minority business owners account for 36% of total firms, however there are significant differences in terms of ownership rates across the different racial and ethnic minority groups. Orlando’s African American and Hispanic populations have lower rates of business ownership in relation to their total share of the population. Although African Americans account for 28% of the total population they only own 12% of the businesses. Persons of Hispanic origins account for the largest number of minority-owned businesses, with 19% of all firms being Hispanic-owned. Asians are the only minority group to be overrepresented in business ownership, constituting 4% of the population but owning 5% of total firms.

The median household income in Orlando is $42,355, 12% lower than Florida’s median household income of $47,661 and 23% lower than national median income of $51,914. Poverty rates are also slightly higher than national and state average of 13%, with 16% of Orlando residents living below the federal poverty line.

**Engagement and Volunteerism**

Engagement and volunteerism in Orlando is lower than the national averages. With an overall volunteer rate of 22%, Orlando is 18% lower than the national average of 26%. On average, these volunteers contributed 2% less time than nationwide, with an average of 33.4 hours of contribution per volunteer annually in Orlando, compared to 34.1 hours nationally. Likewise, the national retention rate of 64% is much higher than in Orlando, where only 55% of volunteers are retained.
Orlando Main Streets Program Overview

Orlando Main Street was established by the City of Orlando in 2007 and currently has seven member commercial districts. The program is run out of the City of Orlando’s Economic Development Department in the Office of Business Assistance. Districts receive funding for operation from the city budget and receive technical assistance.

As many of the commercial areas in Orlando are not traditional Main Street districts, being more suburban in scale and having limited historic character, Orlando Main Streets has created a special “Market Street” designation. This category allows areas that do not meet the National Trust Main Street Center’s historic character criteria to still benefit from the Four Point Approach. In addition to its six Main Street districts there is currently one Market Street district (City of Orlando 2010).

From its inception in 2007 to 2010, Orlando Main Streets has helped create 177 net new businesses, 677 net new full time jobs and 343 net new part time jobs. Over those three years the program leveraged over $138 million in private investment and engaged residents in 16,688 volunteer hours at a $337,027 value (2010 Annual Report Orlando Main Streets 2010).
Portland, Oregon

Population and Demographics

Portland is the 29th largest city in the U.S., with a population of 583,776 in 2010. Between 2000 and 2010 Portland saw a 10% growth in its population, slightly lower than the statewide increase of 12% but higher than the national average of 9%.

Portland has a higher percentage of minority populations and is relatively more diverse than Oregon as a whole although the large majority (76%) of Portland’s population is Non-Hispanic White. Asians account for the next largest segment of the population, at 7.1%, compared to 3.7% for Oregon. African Americans represent 6.3% of Portland’s population, compared to 1.8% statewide. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origins are the only minority group that have a lower concentration in Portland as compared to the state (9.4% and 11.7%, respectively).
Figure 2.5: Map of Portland Main Street Districts and Percent of Non-white Population (US Census 2010)
**Economic Vitality**

Portland’s minority community is underrepresented in its share of business ownership. The rates of business ownership are lower for every racial and ethnic minority group and are disproportionately lower than their share of the population. Hispanic groups have the lowest rate of business ownership in relation to their share of the population, owning 3% of total businesses but representing 9% of the population. African Americans are the second most underrepresented group, owning 3.1% of businesses.

Portland’s median household income is $48,831, less than 1% lower than the median household income for Oregon, $49,260. Notably, poverty levels are 16% higher in Portland; 16.3% of the population in Portland is below the federal poverty line compared to 14% across Oregon.

**Volunteerism and Engagement**

Portland’s volunteer rates are much higher than national averages. Portland’s overall volunteer rate (36.2%), is 36% higher than the national average (26.5%). Similarly, the average Portland volunteer contributes 26% more time than the national average. The average number of annual volunteer hours per person is 43 in Portland compared to only 34 hours per person nationally.

**Portland Main Streets**

Portland Main Streets is the newest citywide program, established in 2010. The program was launched following the formation and adoption of the 2010 Neighborhood Economic Development Strategy. Currently there are three commercial districts participating in the coordinated citywide program.
Portland Main Streets is run out of the Portland Development Commission (PDC), a quasi-public urban renewal and economic development agency. The PDC is run by an executive director who reports to a board of five commissioners appointed by the mayor and approved by City Council. The Portland Main Street program is funded through the City’s General Funds, which is included each year in the PDC’s annual budget and approved by City Council. Districts receive some financial assistance from the PDC but must also raise funds from other sources to support their operation.

Portland’s program is unique in its emphasis on sustainability. Portland Main Streets has added a fifth point of “sustainability” to the Four Point structure, requiring every district to incorporate sustainable practices and projects into its program. Also distinct to Portland is the restriction of eligible neighborhoods. Only neighborhoods not located in designated Urban Renewal Areas (URAs) are eligible to be Main Street Neighborhoods, in order “to make revitalization and economic development a city-wide activity” and to provide greater resources to neighborhoods not in URAs. URAs provide a range of resources to businesses, including grants to improve storefronts, loans to expand businesses, funding for infrastructure and streetscape improvements (Portland Development Commission).
Comparison between cities and programs connecting back to opportunities and challenges

The data described above provide a snapshot of the unique urban environment in each of the five cities examined here. Most importantly, they exemplify the different local contexts within which many of the challenges and opportunities to urban commercial revitalization arise. Some important differences and similarities among the five urban contexts are discussed next.

Population and Demographic Comparison

Table 1: Population Change, Race and Ethnicity in Citywide Main Street Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>2010 Population</th>
<th>% Change 2000 - 2010</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>American Indian and Alaskan Native</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Persons reporting two or more races</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>620,961</td>
<td>-4.6%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>617,594</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>601,723</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>238,300</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>583,776</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010

Four out of the five cities have populations of greater than a half million, and all but one are growing. Orlando and Portland are seeing the most growth while Baltimore is experiencing a decline in population, following the national trend of population out-migration in older industrial cities and growth in Sunbelt and west coast cities. The literature suggests that the decades of urban decline are coming to an end with a return of population to inner cities (Seidman 2005). Indeed, of the four cities that are growing, all are growing faster than their home states.
Four of the case study cities, excluding Portland, have a higher proportion of minority residents than Non-Hispanic White residents. On average, the minority population is 40% greater in those four cities than the national average. Portland is the only one of these cities that has a higher percentage of Non-Hispanic White residents than the national average.

While all these cities have greater concentrations of ethnic and racial minorities relative to their surrounding states, the distribution of these groups is different across each of these cities, due to historical trends, policy decisions and immigration patterns. In Baltimore and Washington D.C., there is a majority of African American residents (64%, 50%), while Portland and Boston have the highest concentration of Asians (7%, 9%) and Orlando has the largest percentage of Hispanic population (26%). The literature shows that many of the challenges and opportunities in urban commercial revitalization are correlated with race and ethnicity. In particular, the challenges of revitalization are much more strongly correlated with majority African American neighborhoods than any other racial or ethnic group. However, all of these cities have an opportunity to develop specialized markets through minority entrepreneur development and all have their own unique vernacular culture that can be developed.
Table 2: Minority Business Ownership in Citywide Main Street Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minority Business Ownership</th>
<th>%Black-owned firms</th>
<th>%American-Indian and Alaska Native-owned firms</th>
<th>%Asian-owned firms</th>
<th>%Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-owned firms</th>
<th>%Hispanic-owned firms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>7.10%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>8.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>34.60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>11.60%</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
<td>7.90%</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>7.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>28.20%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>12.10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>18.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>6.70%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2007

Economic Vitality

Across all five cities, Hispanic and African American populations are underrepresented in the business community while Asians are overrepresented. The literature highlights this underlying theme of challenges to business ownership in African American and Hispanic populations specifically, with a disconnection from the job market (and limited access to financial capital) and other institutional barriers being significant challenges to the economic vitality of these populations.
Table 3: Economic Characteristics, Density and Engagement in Citywide Main Street Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Economic Characteristics</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>Persons below poverty level</td>
<td>Persons per square Mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>$51,914</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>$39,386</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>7,671.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>$50,684</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>12,792.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>$58,526</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>9,856.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>$42,355</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>2,327.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>$48,831</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>4,375.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2005, 2010 and Corporation for National and Community Service

The cities of Boston and Baltimore have the highest poverty rates while Portland has the lowest of the five cities. Baltimore is the most economically stressed with the lowest median income and highest poverty rate. Washington D.C. shows the greatest income inequality with the highest median income and third highest poverty rate. All of these five cities, excluding D.C., have median household incomes that are below the national average. All five cities have greater rates of poverty than the national average. This is one of main challenges the literature reports for cities, persistent poverty and a large low- and moderate-income population base. Despite decades of efforts, poverty remains a significant and persistent issue in urban commercial revitalization.

Volunteerism and Engagement

The literature shows that engagement and volunteerism are critical components to successful revitalization. Four of the cities, excluding Orlando, have higher volunteer rates than the national average. Portland has the highest rate of volunteerism, and Baltimore has the highest average number of volunteer hours per resident out of all the cities. While Orlando has the lowest rates of volunteerism, its Main Street communities have the highest yearly rate of investment ($34 million/year).
Interview Results

The five interview questions asked to each of the citywide Main Street program administrators are listed below. Following each interview question, results based on transcript analysis and coding are reported. A brief description and summary of the responses is put forward in narrative form. Then, under each response a word cloud, as described in the methodology, helps to show a snapshot of the most highly used words in each response. Then the coding system, outlined in Chapter III, is applied to the transcripts to help filter out emergent themes relevant to the hypothesis (See Appendix B for full transcript of each interview and Appendix C for coding of transcript themes for each interview question). Emergent themes are noted in the conclusion of this chapter and carried over into Chapter V: Discussion for further analysis and synthesis.

Question 1

What additions to the Four Point Approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities to urban commercial revitalization?

Response:

Each of the four respondents noted that a more full exploration of the Four Points Approach could assist in making it more applicable to urban commercial revitalization. Three of the four respondents specifically mentioned “safety” or “crime” as a factor of the urban environment that needs to be addressed and two of the respondents noted that “green” or “sustainability” initiatives could be included or expanded upon in the urban environment as well. Focusing in on the current definitions of each of the Four Points and looking at ways to expand or frame them to
make them more applicable in the unique citywide programs was discussed by each respondent. All four respondents discussed how the organization point could further assist in capacity building, two discussed a focus on fundraising and two related organization back to potential safety initiatives. Two respondents noted how the design point could be expanded to include safety initiatives through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) or “business watch programs.” One respondent spoke of how the promotion point could also be used to promote safety initiatives through working with police departments through events like National Night Out.

Figure 3.1 Word Cloud Representation of Interview Responses from Question 1
Response:

In response to this question, one respondent said “No, because it’s not an issue,” while another respondent noted that “As it stands right now in the Main Street world, they don't.” The other two respondents noted that these three major themes of the urban commercial revitalization literature are much too large for any one program, specifically a Main Street program, to handle on its own and require partnerships with the city government and other organizations. Specific to poverty, three of the four respondents noted that the Main Street Approach is not meant to be applied in high poverty areas and that a certain level of engagement and investment must be present for the approach to be able to take hold. Similarly, with reference to disinvestment and crime, three of the four respondents cited a need for broader partnership with the city government to handle these issues. One respondent highlighted that disinvestment, on a small scale in the form of an absentee landlord could be addressed through the Main Street Approach, but that neighborhood-wide disinvestment was, again, outside of the intended scope of the program.
Question 3

Would citywide Main Street Programs better serve their districts and city needs if they were not connected to city government?

Response:

All four respondents noted benefits and challenges related to their connection to city government. Two respondents specifically stated that their connection to city government allowed them to play an effective collaborative role as administrators connecting different departments and agendas to the pertinent and pressing needs of their Main Street districts. One respondent said that the recognition of citywide Main Street among other city departments took some time, but once the other departments learned about the program and its objectives they became more willing to work collaboratively to assist in the application of the Four Points
Approach. All four respondents also mentioned the importance of city funding to their continued operation and two noted the difficulty of competition for inclusion in city budgets. One respondent also noted the difficulty each of the individual districts had in raising funds due to their connection to the city government and the perception from potential funders that they were solely a program of the city and did not necessarily need outside funds. Lack of trust in the government was also mentioned by three of the responders who talked about how, specifically in minority districts, lack of trust led to less involvement and slower implementation of the approach. Politics emerged as a major challenge for two of the respondents who related how city commissioners/councilors attempted to “use” the Main Street districts for political gain. One respondent focused on how, after many years, the citywide Main Street program has begun to transcend politics and that it has become a part of the fabric of the city that no individual council person can claim.

Figure 3.3 Word Cloud Representation of Interview Responses to Question 3
Question 4

How can citywide Main Street Programs grow/expand to include cultural enclaves and ethnically unique business districts in their cities?

Response:

Three of the four respondents reported that their Main Street programs already include at least one cultural or ethnic minority district. All four respondents discussed ways to improve and expand this inclusion of cultural enclaves through continued flexibility to the needs of minority business owners. Three respondents specifically mentioned the need to be proactive in providing translation services and translated materials when new Main Street programming is taking place. Two respondents discussed tensions that sometimes arise as long-standing business owners begin to adapt to cultural differences of new businesses in their commercial districts. Two respondents noted that differences in signage, colors and promotional strategies in culturally unique business districts may not always fit the standard Main Street mold, but that flexibility and communication are key to continued progress. Two respondents discussed programs in their cities that encourage the inclusion of cultural commercial districts in Main Street trainings but do not put forward the exact same requirements as the officially designated Main Street districts. One respondent discussed what she called a “Market Street District” while another talked about a “Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative” that targeted minority commercial districts for revitalization. Regardless of the name given, all four respondents agreed that there was space inside the Main Street Approach to assist in the continued community and economic development of minority business districts. They noted, though, that current capacity and staffing was not yet at levels to meet all of the culturally specific implementation needs.
Question 5

Is there space in the Main Street Approach to add a capacity building step before the initial application of the Four Points Approach so as to be inclusive of long-struggling minority commercial districts?

Response:

All four respondents suggested that space for this capacity building step was both already a part of the organization point and reiterated their answers from the previous question about the inclusion of minority business districts in their programs. Three of the four respondents also reiterated that particularly focusing on long-struggling districts was outside of the scope of Main Street and that districts had to be “ready” to apply the approach. In this vein these respondents also discussed the importance of nonprofit training, recruitment efforts and fundraising as initial
steps before designating a Main Street district. Volunteerism was mentioned by all four of the respondents as a need and as a challenge to each of the individual Main Street districts. Two of the four respondents focused in on the challenge of density which they noted made it difficult to find volunteers and led to unnecessary competition between existing districts. Two respondents also noted the role that passion and leadership played in making any Main Street district a success. One respondent talked about how the scope of the Main Street approach, traditionally a historic preservation program, would need to continue to shift toward economic development and job creation initiatives in this capacity building step to prolong its continued application and success. One respondent astutely noted that patience, persistence and flexibility were fundamental to making the approach work in any district and that with time the key tenants of Main Street will find success if there is buy-in.

Figure 3.5 Word Cloud Representation of Interview Responses to Question 5
Emergent Themes

While each of these questions yielded pages of rich data and multiple avenues for exploration, a few key themes emerged as the most relevant to discussing the unique opportunities and challenges faced by citywide Main Street programs because of their urban environments, coordinated structures and political realities. Through coding the interview transcripts, noting the emphasis placed on certain ideas by long-time practitioners of the Main Street Approach, connecting the vast array of literature on commercial revitalization, and applying key findings of the quantitative inquiry the following themes have emerged:

- Density
- Capacity
- Volunteerism
- Vernacular Culture
- Politics

Synthesis and analysis of results in the following Discussion Chapter will help describe each of these themes in more details and discuss their importance to the application of the citywide Main Street Approach. Through this discussion a broad recommendation to increase the breadth, flexibility and definition of the Four Point Approach in the urban context arises and is explored in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
CHAPTER V: Discussion

Introduction

The realities of the urban context offer both opportunities and challenges for the implementation of the Main Street Four Point Approach to commercial revitalization. As the literature suggests, these complex environments function through the interplay of unique social, economic and political structures. This chapter connects some of the main themes present in the literature to the emergent themes reported in the previous chapter to provide an overview of some the opportunities and challenges facing citywide Main Street Programs. In this chapter, density, an emergent theme of the urban environment, is discussed, followed by an analysis of how capacity issues, volunteerism and vernacular culture impact the coordinating structure of citywide Main Street programs. Finally, the effects of politics on the application of the Main Street Approach are outlined.

Urban Environment - Density

These five cities are centers of dense population, having on average, 85 times more people per square mile than the rest of the country. The literature suggests that there are many endemic economic advantages provided by urban locations, with recent research showing urban areas are actually growing in economic importance, not declining (Glaeser 2010; Porter 1995). Indeed, it is the density inherent to urban environments that actually drives economic prosperity through the agglomeration of business, creativity and innovation (Glaeser 2010). However, density also
begets congestion, resource competition and the magnification of social ills such as poverty and crime (Glaeser 2010, Seidman 2005).

Respondents identified these same elements in their responses, noting in particular the negative impacts of density. Two of the four respondents who discussed the factor of density mentioned it in the frame of a challenge, focusing on competition, resource scarcity and the negative externalities of crime, trash, disinvestment and poverty. As one respondent noted on the differences in an urban program and a rural program: “The difference is, literally, the density issues. The perception is that it’s more [crime, disinvestment, poverty, trash] here, but really we have more people so of course it’s going to seem like more. Density [also] makes the competition impossible for funding and for volunteers and so I think that’s the huge challenge for us - we’re so on top of each other.”

Glaeser (2010) describes these elements as “the price paid for being close to other humans” (p.593). There are costs associated with agglomeration economies, as he notes, “If two people are close enough to exchange an idea face to face, they are also close enough to give each other a disease. If they are close enough to exchange a newspaper, they are also close enough to rob one another” (p. 593). These challenges are reflected in respondent’s experiences, where the human challenges of proximity are a daily struggle. One respondent described this issue in terms of territory:

“In my program I’ve got seven districts now. I’ve got four of them that are right on top of each other and they are the ones that really cannibalize each other and they really do have some ‘turf’ issues’: ‘Where is the line?’ ‘Whose block is that?’ Even with things as small as banners - we
had one district that hung banners that were technically in another district and you know ‘Get your banners out of my district!’ It’s really kind of funny how that works.”

In an urban environment, citywide Main Street programs face the negative as well as positive impacts of density. Responses from practitioners suggest that currently density is a challenge, but can become an opportunity by exploring the unique benefits provided by urban proximity. An expansion of the organization point is presented in Chapter VI that describes one possible tool for embracing the positive urban elements of collaboration, creativity and innovation.

**Coordinating Structure - Capacity and Volunteerism**

The issues facing urban neighborhoods are complex and intertwined, made more challenging by the noted lack of community capacity - the critical resource that allows a community to take on tasks and achieve intended results (Chaskin 2001). The literature presents community capacity as an essential piece of lasting revitalization efforts, with collaborative strategies being the most successful as “interrelated problems require integrated solutions” (Glickman and Servon 1998, p. 500). In relation to capacity, respondents discussed the role of leadership, volunteerism and human investment. These elements follow Glickman and Servon’s (1998) discussion of the five dimensions of community capacity. In particular, responses from practitioners showed a need to build resource capacity, programmatic capacity and network capacity (Glickman and Servon 1998; Arefi 2001).

Respondents relayed a serious challenge in attracting and maintaining volunteers - the social dimension to resource capacity. The Main Street Approach is built on a foundation of
volunteerism, but addressing the intricate problems in urban districts with volunteers requires high levels of capacity and skilled management. One respondent described the challenge of tackling revitalization with a volunteer model: “I think people sometimes who are not as familiar with Main Streets, they feel like, well they’ve got all these volunteers, why aren’t they moving faster? And I try to say, yes, that’s right, they are volunteers! They aren’t being paid and life changes happen and people come and go and directors come and go and there’s always something that sometimes sets an organization back a little bit”.

Investment in social capital is central to growing the resource capacity of citywide programs (Arefi 2002; de Souza Briggs 1997). The ability to build trust and leverage human connections is needed to effectively tackle the issues facing urban neighborhoods (Putnam 2007). As Foster-Fishman et al (2006) note, it is the social and emotional connections that residents have to their community that inspire action, engaging only “when they believe that change is possible, recognize their part in creating change, and believe that programs support their dreams and visions” (p. 145). Respondents echoed these findings, explaining that the most effective volunteer recruitment occurs when participants “catch the spirit and the passion of the program”.

The ability to inspire and mobilize is critical not only to volunteer recruitment, but retention as well. As one respondent noted, “unless they kind of catch that fever, so to speak, they aren’t long term and they don’t really contribute much”. With such broad-reaching implications for overall capacity, citywide programs must turn their attention to fostering social connections, but respondents feel they have limited tools to do so.
As such, programmatic capacity, the ability to provide the services and assistance necessary to achieve results, came across as a significant issue for citywide programs. Respondents described a need to expand into areas of service that are not traditionally associated with Main Street programs. As the literature suggests, the limited social capital in urban areas necessitates a new role for citywide Main Street coordinating programs - that of initially building community capacity. As one respondent noted, “[W]e’ve really found that we’ve had to sort of consider these additional services of [snip] identifying and building neighborhoods, leadership, community building, even helping with nonprofit leadership and engaging nonprofits in the process and that’s sort of a whole different skill set.” These elements are echoed in the literature on community capacity building wherein developing neighborhood leadership, fostering a sense of community, providing access to resources and presenting incentives for neighbors to get involved in the collective effort are all essential pieces of successful revitalization (Foster-Fishman et al 2006). This suggests that although the philosophy of the Main Street Approach relies on people-power, there is a lack of tangible tools for building capacity in distressed urban neighborhoods. Incorporating targeted tools and developing specific strategies that support these efforts are necessary.

Respondents also discussed the development of network capacity, specifically the ability to work with other institutions, government agencies and communicate with the community as important elements to the Main Street Approach. As one respondent noted: “I think the Main Street Program can do that, they can be the voice for the people on the street and then also have that information [from the city] flow through them from these different agencies down to people who
actually live there and work there.” This was noted as a strength throughout the responses, suggesting that citywide programs are well positioned to work collaboratively with the different partners needed for commercial revitalization.

The literature on capacity implies mobilization of both physical and social resources (Arefi 2001; Glickman and Servon 1998; deSousa Briggs 1998). Respondents echoed this, discussing the need to develop social ties, relationships and networks in conjunction with financial support. Similar to what is found in the literature, a strong theme in respondents’ answers were the intricacies and importance of the human elements of revitalization. As one respondent described, “I just think the bottom underlying thing of building capacity has to be creating the passion in people for what they’re doing.” Unlocking the “resources stored in human relationships” (deSousa Briggs, p. 111) is a significant opportunity for citywide Main Streets.

**Coordinating Structure - Vernacular Culture**

A unique strength of urban commercial districts is their position as centers of both culture and commerce. With higher populations of racial/ethnic minorities than their home states, each of these cities enjoys the challenges and benefits afforded by a diverse population. Responses underscored themes in the literature of building social connections and trust, celebrating local culture and providing specialized resources for minority business development.

Building social connections and trust was reported as a challenge to the inclusion of ethnically or racially diverse districts in citywide programs. As discussed above, building trust and relationships is central to the collaborative strategy that citywide programs employ, but previous
actions by government entities in minority neighborhoods makes this a difficult task. Distrust of
the government, either from the painful history of urban renewal projects and policies that
targeted low-income minority neighborhoods or fear of legal repercussions in immigrant
communities, is a very real challenge that citywide programs face. One respondent shared, “[I]n
terms of building trust and relationships in the community, especially for our more
disenfranchised neighborhoods, they have trouble trusting the government.”

This is a well-documented topic in the literature on social capital and civic engagement, where
racial/ethnic minorities are missing from the discourse on community decisions, often being the
subject of actions but not participants in the process (de Souza Briggs 1998). This has serious
implications for the practice of revitalization by citywide programs, as one respondent noted,
“There is still that divide of what the government wants from me and what I should show the
government.” De Souza Briggs (1998) calls for all public service professionals to understand and
respond to the “diverse communication codes and subtle power relations” (p.1) of personal
interactions with community members if meaningful and authentic involvement is to occur.
Similarly, Ross and Green Leigh (2000) suggest that without an explicit discussion of the
influence of racism, revitalization strategies will be doomed to fail.

Furthermore, as the literature suggests, there are conflicts within neighborhoods and between
racial/ethnic groups that challenge the relationship building needed for collaborative efforts. As
one respondent discussed, “there are some big issues in the Hispanic community here - we have
the Puerto Rican community, the Cuban community and those two communities don’t
necessarily like one another nor get along very well and so there’s all kinds of issues with that”.
Bridging these divisions and developing a shared narrative in diverse urban neighborhoods is critical to revitalization, allowing for new, cross-cultural forms of social solidarity to emerge (Putnam 2007). Although not traditionally a role that Main Street programs play, the reality of social relationships in urban neighborhoods where distinct groups coexist in close proximity calls for direct engagement with these cultural conflicts. Indeed, the literature suggests that those working to revitalize urban communities have a strategic role to play in the reweaving of fragmented community fabric by providing resources, tapping into existing resident abilities and improving linkages to the greater community (Putnam 2007; Foster-Fishman et al 2006; de Souza 2004). Through “small collective steps and direct encouragement of relationship building” (de Souza 2004, p. 156), Main Street programs can affect strategic, purposeful and positive community change and unlock the unique opportunities cultural diversity affords.

The literature suggests that the unique cultural characteristics of a district can be a powerful driver for economic development. Carr and Servon (2009) in particular note “ethnic areas and heritage sites” as rich cultural assets that economic development can come from, preserve and celebrate. Respondents shared this same perspective, with each city having one or more ethnic district in their programs. However, the challenge with supporting the development of vernacular culture is allowing truly unique and distinct characteristics to arise, a practice which is often in direct conflict with the practices and policies of local governments. Indeed, citywide programs are struggling to manage this conflict, working to recognize local culture and allow it to be expressed. One respondent explained: “We’re, to a degree growing, and trying to work with them and say this is a cultural thing, so we need to let this happen, and let this happen because of where it is. And we will be sensitive to the fact that it might not necessarily be okay in another district but here it’s okay.” This suggests that citywide programs can play an important role in
the development of diverse commercial districts, particularly as the “mediating structures” between businesses and city government that Hula et al (1997) call for to “engender trust within the community” (p. 465).

Additionally, citywide programs are called upon to navigate the cultural differences of businesses in diverse districts and must meet the special needs of minority entrepreneurs. The literature suggests that minority-owned businesses are a boon to local economic development, but require particular business development support that may not exist in the community, such as resources in multiple languages or additional financial tools. For citywide programs it is a challenge to fill this need. As one respondent noted, “It’s really having the capacity to make sure that we are providing things in various languages. Now we have some very good directors who will just turn to us and say ‘Will this be available in Spanish?’ or ‘Will this be available in Cantonese?’”. For citywide programs to meet this challenge and leverage the benefits of racial/ethnic minority business development, the literature shows that networks and partnerships with other community organizations and service providers are absolutely essential.

**Political Realities - Politics**

The realities of politics are omnipresent in organizations, and coordinated citywide Main Street programs face them on a daily basis. While respondents discussed many opportunities afforded to their programs because of the connection to city government, they also mentioned some of the challenges they as administrators and their Main Street districts face in the political realm. From conflicting priorities to electoral politics, citywide Main Street programs are constantly dealing with challenges associated with their connection the government. Two respondents dealt specifically with what Innes and Gruber (2005) describe as the political influence approach to
planning - where loyalty and one-on-one promises take dominant form. “There are some of the commissioners who would like to, for lack of a better way to say it, “use” the Main Street Districts to help them get re-elected,” one respondent noted. Another administrator discussed how they were treated as if they were a political appointee with constant calls and demands from a council person when in fact their position is nothing of the sort. One respondent discussed how, because of politics constantly taking place in their districts, they “keep having to tell all the districts to remember that they’re Switzerland.” However, the literature suggests that as community revitalization is “logically bound up with political life” (de Souza Briggs 2004, p. 154), there is a need to acknowledge the inherent power relations and political interests at play. In order to affect change but not be politically co-opted, Main Street programs must be able to engage effectively with politics and power (Forester 1988; de Souza Briggs 2004).

Other political realities are not as drastic but still pose challenges for the application of the citywide Main Street Approach. As one respondent said, “[T]here are times when what my agency is doing is actually in conflict with what my program is intended to do,” and another noted, “[b]ecause it was sort of born from the city, we do ask them to do things that I don’t turn to other nonprofits, maybe even in the same neighborhood, and ask them to do.” These types of day to day realities are expected by administrators, and their efforts of continued adaptation to these paradoxes have helped their programs continue successfully.

Arefi (2002) discusses how political capacity, or “the degree of elected officials’ involvement and support in the decision-making process” (p.92), can effect performance of revitalization efforts. The longstanding success of the one of the respondents programs can be directly tied to
the prolonged support and involvement of the Mayor in their city, who both started and continues to support the citywide Main Street program. As Hula et al suggest, the process through which elected officials “transform preference into policy” (p.461) is based on developing cooperation among political leaders and leveraging private and public resources. The administrator of this program, in fact, discussed how, because of the longevity of the program, and its successes through continued political support, it has finally reached an almost post-political status. The respondent discussed how they could not, at this point, envision any city council person looking to downplay the role of the program or overstep their bounds with the program because of the longstanding political capacity present. The program, through sustained political capacity, has become part of the fabric of the city. This reflects the conclusion of Hula et al (1997) that “politics make a difference” (p.462), and the process through which new programs are adopted into ongoing political agendas is not based solely on merit but rather on the ability of political leaders to champion support for the program. Although not necessary, the literature suggests that continuous political leadership is extremely beneficial, without which the need for an organization to form strong coalitions, working relationships with political leaders and community support is even more important (Hula et al 1997; Cohen 2007; Arefi 2002).

Conclusion

The discussion of the above emergent themes and their connection to the commercial revitalization literature describe how the unique urban context, coordinating structures and political realities of citywide Main Street programs function through the many opportunities and realities they face. These emergent themes, their complications, and the current application of the Four Point Approach set the stage for a recommendation of expanding the definition of each
of the Four Points for the urban context. The following chapter offers a conclusion to this research by putting forth a recommendation for continued breadth and flexibility in the implementation of the Four Point Approach in citywide Main Street Programs.
CHAPTER VI: Conclusion and Recommendations

For this thesis, I set out to discover the opportunities and challenges that citywide Main Street Programs face because of their urban environments, coordinating structures and political realities. Through exploration of the relevant literature, quantitative data, and interviews I have been able to discuss how density, capacity, volunteerism, vernacular culture and politics all impact the day to day application of the Main Street Four Point Approach. The urban frame of these programs makes them a rich place for further research and an interesting place through which to assess the capacities of urban commercial revitalization. While much more research is needed to fully understand the complexities each of these programs face, enough data have been collected to conclude with a recommendation for the continued application of the Four Point Approach in an urban context. In conclusion, there are many challenges turned opportunities that can be capitalized upon in citywide Main Street programs relative to their urban environments, coordinating structures and political realities. A potential way to succeed in capitalizing on these opportunities is to continue to expand the breadth and flexibility of each of the Four Points of the Main Street Approach as to be inclusive of the shifting realities of the urban context.

Recommendation

Continue to define the Four Points Approach: increase breadth, flexibility and definition of each point to adapt to the urban context.
Through the work of many creative people the Four Point Approach to commercial revitalization has been molded and adapted to productive use in communities across the United States. The eight principles which guide the application of this approach have informed the way these points are interpreted and how they maintain their relevance as the realities of commercial revitalization change with the years. Discussions with urban practitioners highlight the need for this continued adaptation of the Four Points through an urban lens. Instead of adding additional points to the process, practitioners suggest that space exists under the interconnected Four Points to address, solve and grow from some of the most pressing urban challenges. As one interview respondent noted, “I think I would advocate more for all of us, for the leaders in the Main Street world, to push more for a more full exploration of each point and to really completely work the point as it was intended to be and not just one single aspect of it.”

Opportunities and challenges discussed in previous chapters, the literature, census data and interviews suggests that crime, safety, disinvestment, poverty, and vernacular culture are some of the most prevalent urban opportunities and challenges. Thus, expanding the breadth of definitions of the Four Points to encapsulate their existence and or utilizing these issues as a lens through which to apply the Four Point Approach could be beneficial in an urban context. This section will outline each of the Four Points as they are most commonly practiced today according to the National Trust Main Street Center and briefly suggest ways in which their definitions could be more fully explored to incorporate the pressing realities of the urban context in citywide Main Street Programs. Each section begins with a slightly amended definition of each of the Four Points and briefly discusses spaces for growth within each.
Organization

“Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various

groups - districts who have a stake in the commercial district - city. By getting everyone working
toward the same goal, your citywide Main Street program can provide effective, ongoing
management and advocacy for the district commercial revitalization of the city. Through
volunteer recruitment, collaboration with partners representing a varied cross section of your
community, and regional fundraising efforts your program can incorporate a wide range of
perspectives into your efforts” - (National Trust Main Street Center, 2009, p. 12)

In the urban context the organization point may benefit from an added tier of regional
cooperation. Having each district suggest a volunteer or board member to be a part of a citywide
volunteer driven committee structure based on the Four Points could be beneficial to increase
cooperation among districts, and add a level of investment in the whole city that makes its way
back to each unique commercial district. This could increase cross-district collaboration and
promotion of the Main Street identity, bolster fund raising efforts, improve branding, and diffuse
political tensions. This added level of grass roots involvement - outside of required
programmatic trainings and networking events - could potentially build pride in the city as a
whole and spur organic creative collaboration that benefits the entire urban economy.
Design

“Design means getting citywide Main Street commercial districts into top physical shape and creating a safe, clean, authentic, sustainable and inviting atmosphere. It takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in a commercial district by directing attention to all of its physical elements: vernacular culture, public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality, and to expedite improvements.” (National Trust Main Street Center, 2009, p. 12)

As one interview respondent noted, “I think a lot of Main Street Programs actually fall short on the design point. It’s so easy to focus on things like facade improvement and that’s really where a lot of Main Street Programs start at and get stuck. They don’t get out of that rut and explore that point which is things like clean, safe and green - all if it falls under the design point.” The design point offers a unique opportunity not only for physical improvements to a district that enhance curb appeal, but also to increasing safety, cultural relevance and volunteer recruitment. As one respondent suggested, safety and crime issues are what bring people to meetings and help them to get involved in a neighborhood they care about. Applying a safety lens to design could help sustained engagement of volunteers who care about these issues. Embracing culturally significant design elements, being flexible and celebrating the uniqueness that different minority or immigrant communities bring to the city could fit well under the design point as well.
**Economic Restructuring**

“Economic Restructuring strengthens your community’s existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, converting unused or underutilized space into productive property, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business people, *increasing community capacity*, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. *Adaptability and inclusion of unique cultural enclaves and minority businesses will help to further strengthen business districts and the economy of the city as a whole.*” (National Trust Main Street Center, 2009, p.12)

As currently stated, economic restructuring focuses most clearly on outcomes and overlooks the many processes necessary to achieve these outcomes. Expanding the lens of economic restructuring to include capacity building, relationship building and access to resources will help this economic development focal point to be more realistic in the challenging urban context. Indeed, citywide Main Street program coordinators are already doing this, just not under the official umbrella of Main Street as seen in the creation of “Market Street Districts” and “Neighborhood Prosperity Initiatives.” One respondent suggested of their alternative program, “[T]his group feels very much like, they use the terminology - ‘building a community,’ and they’re much more focused on not just the business district issues but the community issues as a whole.” Full embrace and explicit mention of the capacity building steps necessary to achieve job creation, business retention and business attraction could assist citywide Main Street Programs in building economic success.
Promotion

“Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that will rekindle community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in your district city. Advertising, retail promotional activities, special events and marketing campaigns help sell the image and promise of Main Street to the community and surrounding region. Promotions communicate your district’s city’s unique characteristics commercial district and offerings to shoppers, investors, business owners and visitors of all cultures and backgrounds.” (National Trust Main Street Center, 2009, p. 12)

In the citywide context promotion of Main Street districts could benefit from connection to the brand and tourism efforts of the city as a whole. This recommendation connects back to the larger view of regional or citywide organization mentioned above. Also, key to the expansion and flexibility of the promotion point is the inclusion of culturally relevant promotional materials. For example, two respondents noted the desire and need to have more of their materials translated into many languages to be inclusive of business owners, residents and potential visitors. Further, embracing cultural events and vernacular culture will help to bridge gaps in cooperation and build an acceptance of Main Streets as, adaptable, culturally relevant programs in urban contexts.

In sum, continued creative exploration of the Four Points will allow for urban programs to adapt to the changing realities of their particular environments. These points, having originally been established with flexibility and informed by eight guiding principles that encourage continued adaptation are already an effective vehicle for urban commercial revitalization. Proactively
looking at each of these points through an urban lens can only serve to strengthen their effectiveness by increasing their applicability to more environments. The foundation for this more full exploration has been established by research conducted for this thesis and will serve citywide Main Street programs well if practitioners continue to exert creativity to increase the breadth of meaning of the Four Point Approach. Instead of trying to recreate the wheel or amend the program through new points or principles consider housing both endemic and national urban challenges and opportunities inside existent committee structures and seek internal collaboration for the most amenable local solutions. Or, take the most pressing opportunities or challenges facing urban districts and make them the lens through which each committee considers their planning and activities. As stressed by the National Trust Main Street Center, each of the Four Points are inextricably linked and work with each other in their current frame.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

**Limitations**

While the final conclusions and recommendations distilled from this research are, in my opinion, valuable insights to the field of urban commercial revitalization, many limitations presented themselves both throughout the process and in the distillation of results that must be addressed. This section highlights five major limitations to the research conducted for this thesis:

- The time frame for this research was spread over two semesters and though much was accomplished, more time would have allowed for the inclusion of more qualitative data
and the possible emergence of more pertinent themes relevant to the context of urban commercial revitalization through the Main Street Approach.

- Though multiple attempts were made to schedule an interview with the Washington DC Main Street program administrator, and interview was not conducted in time for inclusion in this thesis. Missing data from this program takes away from the fullness of ideas, experiences and realities present in the urban application of the Main Street Approach.

- The perspectives present from practitioners in this thesis are solely those of program administrators, or those who oversee the implementation of the coordinating structure of the citywide Main Street Programs in their specific cities. While the insight and value present in their observations should not be understated or underappreciated, a broader scope of opinions from multiple other participating parties in each city would strengthen the richness of understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing citywide Main Street Programs.

- Through the research process I noticed that questions included in the IRB approved interview protocol could have been better-worded to gain more clear responses from practitioners. Of the five emergent “follow-up” research questions which served as the frame for this thesis, many of them have overlapping sentiments which were both confusing and redundant when put forward to practitioners. Better testing of interview questions and a more full understanding of current programmatic functions could have assisted in interview questions which were more to the point and applicable to the main
frame of the research question. This being said, the research question and hypothesis, with further review and more thorough refinement could also have been more to the point.

- While the scope of this thesis was broad the research did not allow for exploration of citywide Main Street programs that have ceased to exist and operate in two major cities in the United States: Milwaukee and Detroit. While both of these cities attempted the use of a coordinated citywide Main Street program, neither city still has a functioning program. The reasons behind the failure of both of these programs was not addressed and interviews with former practitioners from these cities were not conducted.

Further Research

Building off of the limitations mentioned above and looking at some of the unique findings that emerged from this thesis, at least six areas for further research should be explored.

- This same process should be completed again with a much larger respondent pool. These respondents should include: members of city governments not affiliated with the coordinating Main Street Program, district nonprofit executive directors, district committee members, district committee chairs, district volunteers, district funders, district business owners, district residents, former practitioners of failed citywide main street programs, chambers of commerce and local council persons and mayors.
● Research more specifically focused on capacity building and vernacular culture in the context of urban commercial revitalization should be conducted to look at the many ways embracing cultural enclaves can be beneficial to the economic and community development of cities who apply the Main Street Approach.

● A cross comparison of the perspectives and opinions of urban practitioners and rural practitioners to further highlight the similarities and differences that exist in the application of the Four Point Approach should be conducted.

● A more thorough examination on the political culture present in each of the cities including party politics, budget priorities and economic development strategies would be beneficial in further understanding the roles politicians play in urban commercial revitalization.

● Language barriers and trust in the government from minority communities in the implementation of revitalization strategies also emerge as a potential starting point for further research.

● Finally, more research in the exploration, definition, and flexibility of the Four Points of the Main Street Approach should be conducted to decipher if different practical contexts and definitions can positively affect implementation of the strategy. This suggestion, more plainly, would be to empirically test the recommendations put forward in the conclusion of this thesis.
Self Reflection

This thesis was most truly born out of a love for my home – Richmond, VA. Through working in the community as an organizer, involved citizen and an aspiring planner, I’ve seen many urban commercial districts that are looking for an approach to assist them in revitalization. While investigating the numerous approaches currently being applied here and in similar cities across the country, one methodology, with its combination of both people and place-based strategies, continued to stick out. The more I became involved in Main Street, the more I began to believe, that with the right leadership, this approach could be applied successfully in my urban environment. An initial attempt to conduct a Studio II process aimed at assessing the viability of the citywide Main Street Approach in Richmond quickly found me with many overarching questions that needed to be addressed fully before suggesting such an approach be applied. This thesis is a result of the investigation of citywide Main Street born out of a true belief that Main Street, or a program similar, could assist urban commercial districts in my home city in becoming more prosperous, more authentic and more successful. While only four interviews are included as a part of this thesis, I spoke with more than forty Main Street practitioners from across the country on an informal basis and have investigated many aspects of the approach that are not specifically addressed in this thesis. As I continue to look for the best solutions to improving the urban environment in Richmond, VA I hope to put forth more ideas, insights and suggestions about urban commercial revitalization. This process has truly been one of growth and I am thankful.


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Appendix A

Interview Instrument

Script- Hello [name], this is Ryan Rinn from Virginia Commonwealth University calling to conduct a brief interview regarding the citywide Main Street® program in [city], thank you for agreeing to participate.

Before we begin the interview I would like to go over your rights as an interview subject for this research. You are in no way obligated to participate in this interview and can choose to cease participating at any time for any reason.

This interview is being recorded for transcription purposes unless you would prefer that a digital recording device not be used. Upon completion of this interview the digital recording will be transcribed and all identifying factors attributed to you will be removed, unless you would like to have your name used – this data will be classified into one of four categories based on your involvement in the citywide main street process: program administrative, district administrative, government or district participant. If you prefer that our interview not be recorded, then the information that you provide will not be used in the study.

This interview should take no more than 30 minutes to complete and, again, you are free to leave this interview at any time for any reason. Do you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant and your involvement in this process?

The following questions are broken up into four categories of inquiry about the citywide main street approach: 1)The urban environment, 2)the coordinated structure of the program, 3)political realities, and 4)general follow-up questions. Please feel free to skip any question you do not wish to answer. Are you ready to begin?
Urban Environment

How does the use of the Four Point® approach apply in an urban commercial district?

Does being in a city offer particular benefits or disadvantages to applying the Main Street Approach®?

Do any of the following issues commonly associated with urban commercial revitalization exist in your district? If so, how do you address them?

- Disinvestment?
- Crime?
- Poverty?
- High vacancy rates?
- Dilapidated buildings?

What affect, if any, does density have on the Main Street Approach® in your district/program?

Does nearby commercial competition affect your district/program?

Coordinated Structure

What are the benefits of being part of a coordinated citywide program? What resources do you have access to?

What are the difficulties of operating under a coordinated citywide structure?

Is there competition among citywide Main Street® Districts? How does this play out?
What level of autonomy do different districts maintain under the coordinated citywide approach?

**Political Realities**

What relationship do elected officials have to your program/district?

Are you funded/do you fund the citywide Main Street® Program through your budget?

How would you describe the relationship of city officials to your program/district?

How does politics impact your work, if at all?

**General Follow-Up Questions**

What additions to the Four Point® approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities to urban commercial revitalization?

Do citywide Main Street® Programs adequately address poverty, disinvestment and crime?

Would citywide Main Street® Programs better serve their districts and city’s needs if they were not connected to the city government?

How can citywide Main Street® Programs grow/expand to include cultural enclaves, and ethnically unique business districts in their cities?

Is there space in the Main Street® Approach to add a capacity building step before the initial application of the Four Points approach so as to be inclusive of long-struggling minority commercial districts?
Appendix B

Interview Transcripts

Interview with Orlando Program Administrator – 3/6/2012 - 36 mins 24 secs

INTERVIEWER: What additions to the Four Point® approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities to urban commercial revitalization?

RESPONDENT: Oh boy...I am kind of up in the air about that whole question, because originally coming into this I was a big proponent of really keeping the 4 points and not having any more because I feel like everything can fit under the Four Points, and now there are a lot of advocates out there that really feel strongly in the urban component that feel a 5th point with the whole clean and safe, which I think can fit under design, I think the whole CEPTED, that whole principle can fit under design. I’m not an advocate one way or another, whatever works for everyone is fine I don’t necessarily think we need anymore than 4 points, but, um, you know again if it makes people more comfortable to have another point or several different points, um, I know that in some of the districts here that has become a really big issue, the whole crime and safety initiative.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the citywide programs look at safety as part of umbrella of 4 points, does it fit in whether its through urban design or organization?

RESPONDENT: I think we as larger cities in the urban areas have probably more of the crime, safety, CEPTED issues than what the standard original rural main street programs have, and you know we have more issues with homelessness in the south especially in Orlando warmer
climates we really have big issues with that, and sometimes they’re lot bigger than a small issue with graffiti. Graffiti is a big issue down here and we have trouble with gangs I think in some of the larger urban areas with with graffiti, so some of those things are a little bit bigger issues. I like what we’re seeing with some of our Main Street districts are adopting, we’re adopting what we call business watch programs which are exactly what a a neighborhood watch program is to a residential neighborhood – and in our city each one of our city commisioners has a liason officer on their staff from the Orlando Police Department, and they are starting to work pretty well with our districts to set up those business watch programs, and do educational symposiums with business owners on how to trespass homeless people and how to get the word out if there is suspiscious activity going on in the district also things like grafitti and providing support to get rid of it right away. And then some other things with trying to do almost like assesments, police officers will do assessments to businesses to let them know where they are at risk for having crime issues and things that may not be costly fixes to them to help their businesses be less of a target. So a lot of those things I think we have are big issues with the urban environment.

INTERVIEWER: Do citywide Main Street® Programs adequately address poverty, disinvestment and crime?

RESPONDENT: You’re asking me the big ones today. I can’t speak to other urban main streets because I dont know enough about that to really give you a... but here the majority of our districts don’t really have those issues. We had one of our districts that is in kind of a low income area and its kind of backing my district right now, but only a portion of it. But I dont know, probably some of the businesses themselves would be considered low income but the area is in
transition mode of gentrification, so I would say probably with in my program the answer is no because its not an issue.

INTERVIEWER: Now I would like to discuss a little bit how the coordinated structure works being a part of city government. Would citywide Main Street® Programs better serve their districts and city’s needs if they were not connected to the city government and/or how is it a benefit to be connected to city government?

RESPONDENT: I think probably the biggest benefit is being housed in the city government, we are in the city family so to speak so I can act as a liason to other city departments and other city employees from within rather than someone from the outside trying to acess those. Now, That’s a positive and a negative, because there are still, at least in our city government, different departments and divisions are somewhat silo-ed. So, just because something is important to the economic development department doesn't mean that its necessarily important to public works. And so I have this issue, i brought it up at my staff meeting this morning in that... I have, kind of, wishes from above come down from the mayor’s office of things they’d like to see in Main Street but when we go to try implement those things, the transportation engineers a lot of times will stand in the way of that. and i dont necessarily, Being inside, I don’t have a way, because it is all inside of city government, i dont necessarily have a way, for lack of a better way to say it twist the arm of the transportation engineers to do what I’d like them to do or to go along with what I would wish to see happen. Its a benefit but it also can be difficult sometimes to get to right place to where we can say we all need to be on the same page with this.
Because again, the people in transportation engineering they kind of have marching orders to do a totally different thing with what they’re doing than what I do. They have their division, you know, may be trying to save money for example on maintenance issues with the city, whereas I want to put in 16 different kinds of lightpoles – and they’re saying well that doesn’t fit in with what our department is supposed to be doing to cut our budget with maintenance for light poles. So, sometimes that’s a little bit difficult when you would think that being inside city government that would be easier.

INTERVIEWER: So the internal advocacy isn’t really part of proper protocol I guess when working in silo’s so to speak? It’s like I’m a department you’re a department and we have our own work plans to meet and this isn’t high on our priority list?

RESPONDENT: Right, I talked to [name redacted] when I first got here, from Baltimore. I was a little frustrated when I first go here and she told me that it took her about 3 or 4 years when she got to Baltimore to where the other city departments were like, oh, you’re Main Street, okay we know what that is now and we know what we can do to help you. And I noticed that probably about year 3 as well. When the other people in the city you know when I first got there and people would say “what is main street?” they didn’t even know what it was so about the first couple of times the mayor included is included us in the state of the city speech, they would see that it was somewhat it was important to the administration then I would get a little bit more cooperation. Or if department heads would speak to other department heads and say that you know, the mayor thinks this is an important initiative you know, we need the people in your department to help... that has helped a lot. That is definitely a benefit of being inside the city. But
you know, if, for instance, one of those things in city government, we have a lot of staff turnover so, if we get a department head that um... we have a thing here that we call the BAT team, which stands for Business Assistance Team and they kind of turned that into, I went to my supervisors after I was hear about two years and was very frustrated with that issue... They asked that we kind of redo the BAT team so that it would be the BAT main street team so that we could get more cooperation, and so we had representatives from all the different divisions. And we found out through that process - and we are actually like getting ready to redo it again - that we don’t always necessarily have the correct person from that division. You know we may have a person from transportation engineering but we may need the department head from public works to be on there or we had somebody from the Orlando Police Department who was the person that our districts have to apply to for what we call AGA permit to do an outdoor event - that person didn’t feel that it was important enough of her time to come to a meeting so we’re finding out that maybe she wasn’t the appropiat person maybe it needed to be a person from OPD that was a community affairs person. It kind of takes takes tweaking I think and experience and people in other divisions and departments letting you know who the appropriate people cause as soon as i find somebody and make a contact or make a relationship with somebody they can move on or they can move up or move somewhere else into a totally different department, so sometimes that’s challenging.

INTERVIEWER: With it being politicized sometimes too, when it comes down to being put into political situations, does that affect you.
RESPONDENT: Being put into political situation whereas in rural programs there is one downtown, it becomes more of a political football. Does that affect you?

It affects me constantly. You get put into positions that you don’t necessarily want to be in and its a little tricky to figure out how to get out. You know I had one, and I dont want you to put this in your paper but just to give you an example...

[Section redacted per respondents request]

The commissioners tend, at least from what I’ve seen, the commissioners tend to view their role as almost like each one of them is a little miniature mayor of their districts. And so they feel very much like “it’s my district” and you know keeping them informed and keeping them involved while still keeping them so that they’re not so involved that they’re intrusive. It really is kind of a big juggling act to do because they really expect you to let them know every single little thing thats going on. You know if a manager quits or something happens I have to make sure that I let them know right away, before, you know so they dont hear it from somebody else. And so there’s a lot more communication with them and their aides. And then, you know, inviting them to all the events as well as inviting the mayor. Like right now we are in the middle of an election, which has been very interesting. We have one of the city commissioners that is running against the mayor so we’ve had to really be careful in the districts that he’s in. It’s like you still have to invite the mayor. So I keep have to telling all the districts to remember that they’re Switzerland.
INTERVIEWER: So there is a whole added layer both to your and your executive director and managers job description that is handling this political reality that is constantly on their doorstep no matter what day it is?

RESPONDENT: Exactly. There are some of the commissioners who would like to, for lack of a better way to say it, “use” the Main Street Districts to help them get re-elected and that whole thing. It was funny I was just telling them at staff meeting today, one of my new districts had this big celebration last week to tout their successes and it was like this big political thing. Alllllll the political people were there, you know, just to see and be seen, which has never really happened before. And this district is a multi-jurisdictional district that’s half in the county and half in the city so you had all the city people there, all the county people there. Very interesting dynamic going on.

INTERVIEWER: I bet. In terms of your experience in the statewide program in Ohio, a rural program, did that ever happen, those types of...

RESPONDENT: Not to this level, I mean, you know, there where times when I would go in to work with a community and they would say, oh, you know, while you’re here City Council meeting is tonite we’d like you to go to City Council Meeting so we can kind of, you know, it was their way to get credibility to the local program because they weren’t that intwined with local government. Usually the communities that I would work with would go to their city government once a year to get funding of some sort at whatever level. A lot of times they would get into a fight you know to keep their funding from the city government. So if I was there and
there was a council meeting they would want to have the opportunity to have me go and sit in and they would ask to introduce me and ask me to say a couple words. Usually I’d get to go meet the Mayor and City Council people. It was just kind of, one of those glad-handing type of things. But as the coordinator, the only time I ever really interacted with city government was if they invited me to something or if I was doing the original assessment visit in a community, or if the mayor, a city council person or county commissioner were on the board of directors, that type of thing. But nothing like, NOTHING, like this, EVER. And I don’t remember ever hearing, I mean I do remember in some of the urban districts that I had in Ohio, um, I remember some of the urban people telling me you know, about how they have to deal with their city council people or their mayors or whoever that might be in their areas, a little bit more, but um, I don’t ever remember it being this intense. Haha, maybe I just wasn’t paying attention, hahahaha.

Well, its a lot easier, obviously, lets see... If a Main Street Manager were an employee of a city and they were housed in City Hall I would assume that they would kind of be in the same type situation that I’m in. It’s very easy for the commissioners to, which some of them do, pick up the phone or have their staff pick up the phone and kind of say, uh, “we want you to come to our office right now!” Some of them have come up to my office and sought me out in my cubicle, its just, you’re just at a lot more, you’re more accessible.

INTERVIEWER: How can citywide Main Street® Programs grow/expand to include cultural enclaves, and ethnically unique business districts in their cities?
RESPONDENT: We’ve kind of done that a little bit and I can’t give you an answer as to what the outcome will be. I was given a new district this year and you know being that we are in the National Trust Main Street Program this district did not fit that mold. I don’t know if I’ve told you this before but I assume that I did, and it’s a very heavily Hispanic district. It’s not completely Hispanic, it’s about 30% non-Hispanic but it’s a very heavily Hispanic district and a lot of the businesses there, the owners don’t speak English. It’s a whole different thing, plus it’s a very auto-oriented district on a six lane highway that leads into the airport. So, not a typical Main Street District by any stretch of the imagination. We just kind of made up a designation for it, it’s included in our Main Street Program - same funding, same, you know we use the Four Point Approach, everything is the same except for there is no historic character, there are no historic buildings, there’s nothing historic or Main Street-esque about this area. We call it a “Market Street District.” It’s more of a business association, although we are using the Main Street philosophy and we have included the residential neighborhood people that live around the district on the board of directors and the committees, which is really an interesting dynamic. And actually this group feels very much like, they use the terminology “building a community”, and they’re much more focused on not just the business district issues but the community issues as a whole. It is a big difference, I worry a little bit about them losing focus, with the business issues. And there are some big issues in the Hispanic community here - we have the Puerto Rican community, the Cuban community and those two communities don’t necessarily like one another nor get along very well and so there’s all kinds of issues with that. There’s a LOT going on there. I’m trying to get them to stay focused on what their mission and their goal is which is to improve the business district as a better gateway into the community from the airport. A more pedestrian friendly environment, the aesthetics involved and also trying to help the businesses
there. There’s an awful lot of chain businesses and things like that in that area as well so that’s a whole nuther ball game. We’ll see what’s gonna happen there, I’m kind of, ehhh, cautiously optimistic. I think there’s things that the Main Street Program can bring to a district like that but I’m not sure in the long term how good of a fit that whole four point philosophy will be. So it’s almost kind of like a trial.

It’ll be interesting to see, because there’s been a vision plan done for the area. There is a desire to you know, really bring the cultural aspects into this area but it is one of the most densely populated areas in the entire city because there’s a lot of condos and apartments and things like that and in a very small area. There’s a lot of issues going on there, so we’ll see, but there’s never been any kind of a business organization, professional organization, anything in this area so there’s kind of a rallying point for people to get together and improve their area. It’s grown. It was very difficult to get it started, way more difficult than what I’ve seen anywhere else, but once the leadership got involved, you know the commissioner has done a lot of stuff...we’ll have to see where it takes us.

INTERVIEWER: Is there space in the Main Street® Approach to add a capacity building step before the initial application of the Four Points approach so as to be inclusive of long-struggling minority commercial districts?

RESPONDENT: You really have them loaded today, don’t you? I didn’t know you guys were gonna make me think so hard. hahaha.
The whole urban component, we’ve had this discussion quite a few times, we are really challenged with the whole issue of capacity and volunteers in the organizations and I think that [name redacted], on the list serve had spoken to the whole thing about cannibalizing our districts. It really is interesting to see. In my program I’ve got seven districts now. I’ve got four of them that are right on top of each other and they are the ones that really cannibalize each other and they really do have some “turf issues” - “where’s the line?” “Whose block is that?” Even with things as small as banners - we had one district that hung banners that were technically in another district and you know “get your banners out of my district” - its really kind of funny how that works. And then the ones that are pretty much off in an area by themselves that don’t have anybody anywhere near them, have way more committed people, they don’t have as many capacity issues because their pool is larger to draw on and that type of thing.

Let me say this, when I was in Ohio, we pretty much, the way we did everything, we pretty much built the organization and capacity with volunteers first. Some of the districts I would say would take 2-3 years before they would get to the point that they had the funding to actually come in as a designated Main Street Program and hire staff. So the volunteers were kind of building capacity at a grass roots level for quite a long period of time and so they kind of reached this point, I think volunteers kind of reach this point where they say, “Okay, we’re really working hard and we have real jobs and real lives...when are we going to stop working this hard and find a full time executive director.” I think that’s kind of when they reach that tipping point of, “we’re working way too hard and we need to turn this over to somebody that it’s gonna be their full time job to do it.” There’s kind of a point, when it comes to it, where it can go forwards or it can go backwards or it can totally fail. So I think that is a little bit difficult.
The way we set the program up here really, was a little bit of an experiment for me to see, what would happen with programs if you started them with the money up front and the executive director up front to help the volunteers build the program and build the capacity. And which one of those approaches is better? And it’s funny because, I just think it depends on the people more than it depends on the set up, or whether they have money, or whether its all volunteers. I’ve seen it done both ways now and I think its six in one and a half dozen in the other. I think it depends on the leadership more than it depends on the organizational structure of how things go. If you have good leadership I think they can go for a long period of time without necessarily having an executive director and they will build the organization. I’ve seen it where the executive director builds the organization. I’ve seen it where I’ve had to go help build the organization. I just think the bottom underlying thing of building capacity has to be creating the passion in people for what they’re doing. I think that’s the most important factor, more than money, more than anything else, but they have to have, you know, that passion for a goal of “when we get here we’ve achieved something.”

It still is just very hard, I think, in an urban setting, I don’t know what.... let me just say, I don’t know if there’s a magic bullet to building capacity in urban areas. I think there’s lots of thoughts about how to do that. I would love to see some creative way of finding volunteers. I tell you when...I know this sounds very funny coming from the Orlando person but... The year that Disney did the, I forget the name of the program that they did, but they had a national program to encourage volunteerism across the country. They did this whole marketing campaign and they had a website where if you would volunteer for a 501(c)(3) organization for like a day. If you
gave a day’s worth of work and you turned it into this website to Disney, and you had to have it
documented somehow, Disney would give you a free ticket to Disney World for a day. So it’s
kind of like, give a day, get a day, something like that was their marketing concept. And being
that we were in Orlando that really worked well for us. We got a lot of new volunteers to help
with our events and things like that, but as soon as the program was over, they all went away.
So we didn’t necessarily retain any of those volunteers. It was all a “I’m just doing this to get
the free Disney ticket” thing.

There needs to be some kind of incentive, that’s a long term incentive and I’m not sure that any
of us in Main Street have the financial, or you know, the connections. I came to the city with an
idea saying lets do this for the City of Orlando with all the different entities that we have and try
to build that as a citywide volunteer thing and you know, it didn’t get legs.

We have Disney and Universal and Wet and Wild and theme parks and all the other things we
could draw on but how much are they actually going to give? You know, to start an effort like
that. The only thing I’ve ever seen really be effective and really work is if people catch the spirit
and the passion of the program, that’s really... you know most volunteers will come in out of
curiosity or there is something they want to get from the organization but unless they kind of
catch that fever, so to speak, they aren’t long term and they don’t really contribute much. I gotta
tell you we were just talking this morning about one of the people that I recruited in like a year
ago and she was so skeptical and thought we were all weirdos and had no idea what she was
doing getting involved with us and now she’s one of the biggest proponents of the program. She
told me last week that now Main Street runs through my veins and I speak it fluently. That’s
what has to happen to build the capacity. So a lot depends on the messaging and its hard, where do we find these people to begin with and how do we cultivate them and really get the message out there so they do catch that fever. That is truly the $600,000 question.

INTERVIEWER: Wow, well thank you for your time today I really appreciate all of your insight. I’m ending the recording now.
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INTERVIEWER: What additions to the Four Point® approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities to urban commercial revitalization?

RESPONDENT: I think that’s a really good question, you know, um I know there has been a lot of talk about adding a fifth point, for example Main Street Maryland has Clean Safe and Green. However, I don’t know if I would advocate for say, an addition either of another point or of another strategy. What I would argue for is for a more full exploration of each of the Four Points. Because I think, for example, this is where I think a lot of Main Street Programs actually fall short on is the Design point. It’s so easy to focus on things like facade improvements and I think that’s what people typically think of when they think of the Design point. It’s “Oh, we’re doing facade improvements, we’re doing building improvement” and that’s really where a lot of Main Street Programs start at and then get stuck doing. They don’t fully get out of that rut and explore that point which is things like Clean Safe and Green all of it falls under the Design Point. Its the look and feel of the neighborhood. I’m always surprised, though I shouldn’t be at this stage, where Design Committees or local Main Street programs are sort of letting another organization in the community handle crime issues or trash issues and thats perfectly appropriate to fall under the design point. So I think I would advocate more for all of us, for the leaders in the Main Street world to push for a more full exploration of each point and to really completely work the point as it was intended to be and not just one single aspect of it.

What’s odd is that I think a lot of volunteers come to Main Street concerned about things like, everybody’s concerned about crime and grime, and that would be a great way to get them
involved. But a lot of local programs, it seems like focusing on those issues is sort of an afterthought or done sort of later on in the programs lifetime. Initially they’re getting them to do facade improvements, something very tangible, it gives them something very specific to do but really they should be working the whole point in my opinion.

INTERVIEWER: Do citywide Main Street® Programs adequately address poverty, disinvestment and crime?

RESPONDENT: I think that, as things stand right now in the Main Street world, they don’t. I think that Main street programs do need to be connected to city government. Because I don’t think a Main Street program can act in a vacuum. A Main Street program alone cannot address these huge issues of poverty or disinvestment or crime - especially disinvestment and crime. I don’t think that Main Street programs, especially when you think of neighborhoods that are really low socioeconomic status and they’ve really sort of been ignored for a long time, a Main Street program needs something happening there in order for the Main Street program to be successful. It can’t be a neighborhood that’s so far gone...that the Main Street program is going to be able to come in and sort of be that fix, that is not, not an effective use of Main Street resources and in my opinion it only ends up being a failure in that situation. There needs to be some sort of strength to build off of, some momentum, and a lot of time that means that the Main Street program is working in partnership with other initiatives such as other initiatives that the city government has going - Like the Department of Transportation is coming in and redoing the roads in that area or installing street lights and then the Department of Public works is coming in and working on trash issues and the Police Department is working on dealing with the crime and
then all those issues together... I think the Main Street, a great function for it is to be the bridge between all of that for the commercial district. It’s really difficult when you’ve got all of those players and everything going on, for somebody who’s not involved with city government to really understand what is going on and keep track of everything. I think that’s where a Main Street program can do that, they can be the voice for the people on the street and then also be that, have that information flow through them from these different agencies down to people who actually live there and work there. So I think that it can, a citywide Main Street program can handle issues such as disinvestment and crime and things of that nature but it can’t do it alone.

Even in Baltimore we’ve considered taking a few years where we don’t designate a community as a full fledged Main Street, but we work with them to help assess their readiness and also to help get them ready to become a Main Street. That may be leadership building and really working with the community to get something going so that they would be ready to start work on something that’s Main Street. And we’re not sure what we’re going to do with that yet, because I think typically we’ve just been working doing the main street approach and implementing Main Street in our neighborhoods but we’ve really found that we’ve had to sort of consider these additional services of, like I said, identifying and building neighborhoods, leadership, community building, even helping with nonprofit leadership and engaging nonprofits in the process and that’s sort of a whole different skill set. Something that we’ve been doing some work with and talking about, well maybe we need to add these tools in because nobody else is doing it, but we need to find a partner that can do that for us.
INTERVIEWER: Would citywide Main Street® Programs better serve their districts and city’s needs if they were not connected to the city government?

RESPONDENT: The most obvious one is city politics. We’re housed at the Baltimore Development Corporation and the Baltimore Development Corporation is charged with bringing business into the city. So they don’t distinguish whether that is a small locally-owned business or whether that’s Wal-Mart. So there are times when what my agency is doing is actually in conflict with what my program is intended to do. And I think that can be challenging both for our program and in sort of explaining that to our constituents. How does the city recruit businesses to the city, broadly, and that they have many different goals associated with that. Sometimes there can even be a struggle I think, just personnel-wise, with us dealing with it on a daily basis.

Definitely politics comes into play, or can come into play, when you’re going through an application process. There’s certain neighborhoods that, you know, legislators will advocate for and that may not be appropriate for the main street approach for all the reasons we’ve already discussed. So that can be a challenge. I think also, sometimes there’s initiatives taken on by the city that get all the resources. They get the people, the funding, the everything and we’re sort of in the pot with everybody else trying to fight for our own resources just like any other project or program the city has and sometimes that can be very challenging. There’s definitely, that, and one other thing I want to add on there.
Sometimes, in terms of building trust and relationships in the community, especially for our more disenfranchised neighborhoods, they have trouble trusting the government. So, sometimes we want to say we’re from the Main Street program and sometimes we want to say we’re from the Baltimore Development Corporation. And that can be difficult because they just see us as city employees. It takes a long time to build relationships and get past that. Not through any fault of this city or any others, you know, what they are doing or may not be doing. I’ve talked to other citywide coordinators and they say they’ve experienced sort of the same sort of trouble with getting people to trust them, at times.

INTERVIEWER: How can citywide Main Street® Programs grow/expand to include cultural enclaves, and ethnically unique business districts in their cities?

RESPONDENT: Well we definitely have some ethnically unique business districts in our communities here in the city. There’s Little Italy, there’s a huge Latino area in upper Fells Point, Fells Point being a Main Street. Highland town is very largely Latino merchants then right off of highland town is Greek Town, not a main street but right off of our Main Street. And I think it’s important with, cause there’s definitely I think challenges with sort of the standard old guard merchants in the neighborhoods and then a newer, maybe somebody from a different ethnic group coming in. Especially when there’s differences in how they do business. So, for example, Latino merchants really use a lot of color in their signage and use a lot of signage. That’s like the way that they show that they’re open for business. Where it seems like there are sort of, other merchants are saying “they’ve gotta follow the city rules” when there might be a language barrier. And then also their typical, culturally, like I said what they do to show that they are open
for business. So I think trying to overcome those differences can sometimes be difficult. The way to foster that is to use events that the Main Street does that celebrates the different ethnic and cultural groups which we’ve done, we’ve done some of those events, especially in Fells Point area. And then also making sure that they’re included in things that you do. So getting materials translated into other languages, for us that means definitely Spanish and Korean at the very least. Having people who can translate on the ground, because what we’ve found is that they want to participate in the business district so how do we overcome the barriers to their participation. That’s what we look to do. Definitely, we have that focus on a particular, for instance Pennsylvania Avenue is known for its former jazz clubs and I think those are strengths we should be building on and celebrating and that’s something that Main Street actually does really well. And I think that’s also how the neighborhoods within the city can distinguish themselves from each other, which is also important. And I think that’s part of our job to help do that and help them do that.

INTERVIEWER: Is there space in the Main Street® Approach to add a capacity building step before the initial application of the Four Points approach so as to be inclusive of long-struggling minority commercial districts? Is there anything else that really sticks out when looking at the coordinated structure, or political environment or the urban realities that sticks out to you having done this for a while that really needs to be looked at?

RESPONDENT: I think we’ve talked about some of them before. Some of our big issues are related to the crime, disinvestment, trash, poverty - You’re gonna find that no matter where you go, whether its Aimes, Iowa or here in Baltimore. The difference is, literally, the density issues.
The perception is that it’s more here, but really, we have more people, so of course, its going to seem like more. And I’m kind of hoping, especially with these urban conversations we are going to have at the conference that more of my citywide brethren or sisters will come to realize that we’re not so difference from the stereotypical main street, or how it was founded. But that the differences that we have are related to some other issues such as - density, which makes the competition impossible for funding and for volunteers and so I think that’s the huge challenge for us and we’re so on top of each other. Whereas a bank can fund Main Street in Aimes, Iowa and another town in Iowa and it’s like two totally different places. Here there like we’re funding Baltimore. I think that competition is really difficult for us. And I think the capacity building thing that we talked about a little bit earlier where we’re feeling like now that some of our programs have been with us for a long time, over ten years, that as we’re thinking about adding new neighborhoods or graduating some of these possibly and bringing on new neighborhoods that there are neighborhoods that we want to work with but that we realize they might not be ready. I think that there are, especially in cities, pockets of commercial activity that I think could benefit from the Main Street Approach and that I would like to work with but they will never be a Main Street district because there’s just not enough of them. And I think there are communities that my whole team would like to work with but we know that they’re just not ready. And that’s gonna call for a different set of skills, a different training and different support from National on down, in terms of getting a community in an organization that is willing to house the main street program and a lot of time that means forming a non-profit themselves going, and helping them with that. It is not easy to teach a group of volunteers to go through that process. It’s a lot to deal with.
INTERVIEWER: Thanks for your time, this is great information. I'm ending the recording now.
INTERVIEWER: What additions to the Four Point approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities to urban commercial revitalization? Is there anything that really sticks out for you in your four years now in running Portland and getting all that set.

RESPONDENT: Really it got started in 2009 - So the answer there is nothing specific as far as the Four Point Approach goes. It is - our issue is totally around the organizational piece and so we can say that would be part of Organization. But it is that the districts are not prepared to launch into working on projects and focusing on committee meetings or committee goals, um, I would say probably our experience was more that it would take six to nine months before a group of individuals can gel. And come up with the organizational pieces that they need or to even understand what it is that they are going to be asking of themselves. And so for us, that’s it - and it really should, we really didn’t know and should have known that, um, that piece was critical and so by rushing right in to the Four Points and committees and work plans and, it really set us backwards, it really set us backwards.

INTERVIEWER: So that whole capacity building step, taking your time up front, making sure people know each other up front before tasks are assigned would really have assisted in smoothing out this process?
RESPONDENT: It is not really about knowing each other, its about roles and responsibilities. So what is the responsibility of a board member, what is the responsibility of the Executive director, program manager. What’s the difference between what they are responsible to do and what the board members are responsible to do and do they understand that, um, that they are fiscal sponsors, so that they are financially responsible for the decisions they make. And so the budget they plan, the fundraising that they do, all of that is critical and they really do need to understand and work on that element before they ever start working on projects or having committee meetings. Now, it would be possible that they would start with one committee, which would be organization, to start for the first six to nine months.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, great, thank you, I’m going to move over to the second question now. Do citywide Main Street programs adequately address poverty, disinvestment and crime? I’m just looking for your perspective.

RESPONDENT: I will say this, that um, I probably would change the question because it’s too generic. So the answer is yes and no. So um, I think that Main Street is based on partnership with the public sector and so as far as disinvestment goes, and uh, crime and poverty, those issues - that is not strictly, that is just not a issue for a program alone to handle. So I think the key there is partnerships. And I can see where, in some cases, there might be the perception of more of an issue in one program area than in others. So, I really don’t think its a yes or no answer.
INTERVIEWER: That’s definitely fair and it kind of goes into the next question talking about the connection to city government. In a lot of cases these city wide main street programs are inside of government and this question tries to get at if that is a good function. As we know a lot of these big issues, as you were saying, have to be handled by multiple players working together. Does the connection to city government help or would more autonomy give you the flexibility you thing you might need in main street districts?

RESPONDENT: Well, so, here’s what I think I just heard you say. That some citywide programs are departments of the city?

INTERVIEWER: Are based out of their development corporations or their own programs inside of economic development.

RESPONDENT: So, I think there are two animals. One is we’re a, we are a city wide program but a coordinating program and maybe your question is, a citywide main street district program, meaning, actually operating the actual organization and so here’s a comparison. Here in Oregon I know that one of our cities, not Portland, but another city, actually has a staff person who operates their Main Street Program, that’s one perspective. Here we are operating the big picture Main Street Program but we don’t operate a district program, so we’re a city staff person, or not, but, we’ll say for your question here we’re an urban renewal agency but connected with the city. But we just administer to the other programs so we don’t have a city staff person per se running the actual program in the district. So it’s really too different animals
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that makes sense.

RESPONDENT: So, I don’t see if the main question here is more the other city situation where you have an actual city employee, just having spent several days with that person, they explain that it was very difficult for them because they wear two hats. Yes they were the manager of the main street program but they were also the economic development professional for the city. And so, just timing wise, very difficult but the reality is that their salary is covered by the city so, you just have no, really you just don’t know if the businesses would have supported picking up all that salary. And so I don’t know.

INTERVIEWER: I see what you are talking about with the two different animals. In talking to the different programs I see the difference in administering a coordinating programs - In that circumstance, is your role with the city help or assist you with being able to get certain types of services? For example in Baltimore, her position inside the BDC allows her access to and to develop relationships with the department of transportation, with public works, with other people who may be great partners in revitalization efforts. Is that something that you see in Portland as well?

RESPONDENT: So, yes and no, we have a totally different structure for our city. Our commissioners actually are the managers of bureaus - we do not have a city manager. So, the bureaus operate independently so it is a different animal.

INTERVIEWER: That sounds really interesting.
RESPONDENT: It’s very interesting. I think there’s not that many cities that have the same structures that our city has.

INTERVIEWER: I really haven’t heard of anything like that in the other citywide Main Street communities. Well I’m going to move over to the fourth question on this list of follow-ups that just says: How can Citywide Main Street Programs grow or expand to include cultural enclaves and ethnically unique business districts in their cities?

RESPONDENT: What do you mean by cultural enclaves?

INTERVIEWER: In a lot of cities you’ll have cultural districts that develop when immigrants move in for whatever reason and start their more unique businesses that might not be found across the city, so looking at these enclaves where new residents come into cities and the types of businesses that take of their that have their own identity, is there a place to incorporate those in the citywide Main Street Approach?

RESPONDENT: Well, for us, here’s how we look at it. The Main Street Approach is something that any business district can say “we’re going to organize and use this structure” cause that’s all it is just a method. So anybody can say “let’s get together, let’s focus on these four areas and that’s how we will expand our business district.” So the answer is yes, anybody, we open our trainings to everyone in the city. The truth is there has been not very much participation by the different um enclaves, not very much and that is uhh, something that has been, it a special
interest that I have. I have not found that what I’m doing works so, um, this its an area that we, really, are interested in and haven't found an answer to how to get that involvement. So, the answer they all, anyone, can use the approach but to be in a Main Street District in a program in a coordinating program, it is, if you are designated literally the city says this is the main street district and then the resources go there. And at this time we are doing a little different approach. We have something called the neighborhood prosperity initiative and it is essentially the same idea only each of the areas that have participated actually, we just yesterday, the city council and our commission, just approved creating brand new, 7 year, urban renewal agencies, serious. Urban renewal areas, I said agencies but i mean areas. They are not required to operate as a main street program. Can they use the um Main Street Approach? Absolutely and they are included in the trainings that we do and so they may find other programs that they want to organize around but that is how we are doing it.

INTERVIEWER: That sounds innovative and like a really good way to allow organic best practices to develop out of unique districts. I’ll be excited to keep up with how that works out for you all. We’ll move on to the last question, and this is one that we kind of covered when we first started talking because it talks a little bit about capacity. Is there space in the Main street approach to add a capacity step.....

RESPONDENT: Let’s see, is there space to add a capacity building step? Well, for us, okay. So we, right now have these six new districts and so um let me see if I can grab some materials here. So what we have done having learned from our um start-up of the Main Street Program what we learned is for us, that, is where we needed to change if we started any new district. And
especially the target areas are that we’re working with now with this MPI are exactly what you are talking about here. They are low income areas with um, the most diverse areas in the city that could be identified as having a need and what let me see if I can find it. Then came about was a tie-in to offer or to require, it isn't even an offer, those districts that are part of this new, NPI its an N like Nancy, program those districts are required to go through i believe its five different multiple hour training so before they can even get going as far as their organizing. Their building their steering committees but as far as taking on projects or any of that they are required to go through these trainings and so they. So the group teaching this class, these trainings is the nonprofit association of Oregon and so we’re talking rock-solid experts teaching them and I think this would be an important point. The National Trust has I believe thought of the approach as a methodology and a movement versus an end and they’ve been so focused because of where they’re housed, around preservation that I think that’s where they’ve put their emphasis. Not, I think they missed out, this opportunity to recognize that what Main Street Programs are are nonprofit organization and that’s really what they are and they are nonprofit organizations focused on economic development through preservation of keeping businesses going redeveloping buildings you know those are just the two main areas. But um, that miss, that lack of comprehension of okay at one time you were the savior program because you were preserving these communities...there probably aren’t that many communities today because we learned you don’t just go in and rip down all the past infrastructure of the community and expect it to expect building brand new is suddenly going to create this new revitalized community, that didn’t work. So they’re no longer this savior they’re no longer, that’s not really what cities are willing to pay for or states. So today, its about economic development, jobs, that’s what its
about. Driving communities, opportunities for new business, so that is the piece that on this question I think is the THE most critical.

INTERVIEWER: That’s very helpful and I think that reframing and looking at this from that perspective gives a whole new light to what citywide Main Street Programs both maybe should and can be and I think what you’re doing in Portland is really phenomenal and being able to connect this and have it as a tool and a resource for the entire city is interesting. So thank you so much for sharing that with us. We appreciate your time today.

RESPONDENT: Super, good luck, and I’m glad you guys are working on this. Thanks!
INTERVIEWER: What additions to the Four Point Approach could assist citywide Main Street Programs with addressing the unique realities of urban commercial revitalization?

RESPONDENT: Well I guess I would bring up if we’re really talking about a Four Point Approach and not talking about a fifth or something like that, one of them could be a fundraising type of committee. People have found they can get the organization committee to focus more on other parts of the organization and they can actually sometimes have more luck getting people who really know because calling it an organization committee isn't always clear to people calling it a fundraising committee makes it more clear what they are getting into. I think the other piece is sometimes I guess I would call it a safety committee because there are some districts who have a very very close relationship with whatever the police precinct is in their area and they have regular meetings and they try to get business owners and residents to actually attend and its much more they end up being much more structured and so that’s why I can see where they would come up with what they were calling a safety committee. Because it meets regularly and has, I wouldn't call them events, although they sometimes do that where they will set up something on a national night out in August and they would help bring fire and police and you know the different things where you can kids go through events and teach them what to do if the house were to catch on fire, you know. I know that you can probably do this in some ways under a promotions committee but again it just puts that focus on what the real, um you know, meaning is behind that committee.
INTERVIEWER: That makes a lot of sense, I’ll move onto the next question. Do citywide Main Street Programs adequately address poverty, disinvestment and crime? In your experience how are these major issues addressed with Main Street if at all?

RESPONDENT: Well I think the first one, poverty, is. I have to say, to me that’s not a word that really comes up very much when we talk about our Main Streets. Certainly there is sometimes a disinvestment discussion and it is usually in regard to a particular property. Its not so much the disinvestment of a whole area, it tends to be more of a block or a particular piece that might be owned by you know out of town landlord who’s not really there to watch what’s going on. So when they do try to address it, because the person is, sort of, disengaged from the whole community, um, they do have a hard time, I think approaching somebody like that and getting somebody to respond to what the community is considering disinvestment and what a property owner may see as a building is up to code, its up to all the things I need to do to be you know, within the regulations of ISD or something like that. So I guess what it really comes down to is that I think they do try to address it but its not an easy, its not an easy fix to just turn something around when its a building or a block as opposed to a whole neighborhood.

INTERVIEWER: You know going into a historically poverty stricken area that needs a lot of work, that Main Street is not really that type of approach.

RESPONDENT: Right, I believe that a city would probably take a step back and sort of say, is this really ready to do what a Main Street is supposed to do. And it sounds like in a lot of cases, depending on how you define disinvestment, it might be something else that really needs to
happen first and that would be the responsibility of any city to try to bring you know community to that point where it could then become a Main Street or become, even if its not a full blown Main Street. Do what the NTMC does, you know they do allow I think what they call is Main Street Light where they try to do everything but they don’t quite make it to a full blown Main Street but they are on their way.

INTERVIEWER: That is helpful and that kind of gets into this next question that looks at city government. And I know with Boston Main Streets you have been around the longest and have the most experience working inside city government. How does that really play out, do you get a lot of support, is it necessary and helpful to have all those connections.

RESPONDENT: Well, for us you know, obviously, with the Mayor, Mayor Menino being the one who created it in Boston. We as a coordinating program have had the luxury of having you know support now for, since really since 1995 but really before when he started the program on a test case back in the early 80’s. So I would say yes, its a very positive for us to be the city government who is actually facilitating this program in the neighborhoods. I will say that there’s a neighborhood 501c3 who is receiving funds from the city of Boston and from government there is definitely sometimes confusion of whether that program is a city-funded program or a nonprofit. So the issue that the organizations have is they hear from a lot of people “well if the city gives you money” when they’re fundraising or something like that... there is definitely confusion over whether they in the district are city employees which they are not and I would say that the other piece that’s a little bit tough for them is because we are one of their, in most cases we are their major funder. And because it was sort of born from the city, we do ask them to do
things that I don’t turn to other non-profits maybe even in the same neighborhood and ask them to do. I will turn to them and say, you know... Let’s say, you know the census, you know when the census was going to happen it was really important to the city of Boston to have the most accurate census possible and the Mayor was pushing us to do what we could do. So here we have 20 Main Streets and it makes sense to try to, even though we don’t want the directors to go out there giving census surveys, but how can we use them to spread the word about how important the census is, and where to go for the information, and so they always become a conduit for things that are important to the city and you know, we have to, as the city, remember that these directors have a board of directors who is, you know, paying and guiding them. They have a work plan, and maybe a one year, three year or five year strategy they are working on and we sort of come a long and throw, a little monkey wrench into what they are doing and say can you, you know, go down this route for a few days or a couple of weeks.

INTERVIEWER: That connection with the rest of the city government, different departments, being able to get things done in districts...we’ve heard it helps because you know the right people inside the city that they might be addressed much more quickly than if they were a completely separate entity, has that been the case?

RESPONDENT: I think what happens here is that if somebody, say a director, calls the transportation department about something and they identify themselves as a director of a Main Street Program, I do think it actually, maybe raises a little bit of a red flag, a good red flag, that this is something that needs to be responded to. If its an issue the other department can call us
up. We just got this call can you shed some more light on it, or they might say that this isn't something you normally do. Not that they are going to get special permission but it does help.

INTERVIEWER: That makes a lot of sense, and the one other thing we’ve heard in terms of the political side is that some districts - the political realities that take place with certain council people or commissioners will use districts as political talking points or campaign on them, is that the reality in Boston as well?

RESPONDENT: You know, I believe, and its funny having just spent time with Orlando and Baltimore, I can definitely see where that would come into play. I think here in Boston that I don’t believe a city councilor would put their neck out and do that because its too connected to the mayor, it really is. They actually, what I find, is generally across the board, there is a lot of support for Main Street. To the point where people have said to me, what do you think would happen if the mayor decided not to run, what do you think would happen to the main street program. And my feeling for a while I didn't really know, but now that I’ve seen and have a lot more interaction with some of the city councilors I can’t imagine that they would just get rid of a program that has been working so well just because it was tied to someone else's name. They might try to put a different spin on it somehow or brand it a bit differently but I think ultimately they all agree that the fundamental part of Main Street does work.

INTERVIEWER: Well that’s actually really good to hear - as the longest standing urban program you are kind of the example for everything. Knowing that you can build that you know
capacity and the recognition of the brand and people see that it works and can live on beyond politics is really exciting to hear.

RESPONDENT: And the last piece in regard to being the city and also having it born from the mayor is even when we have districts that are really having some issues, and you know you can look at what their contract says and say, well you’re not fulfilling your contract. We can basically say we’re not gonna fund them anymore, but it doesn't actually ever get itself to that level because as somebody who’s been working with a program and we know how successful it is we’re just gonna work harder to make sure it does work, because I don’t want to tell the mayor we’ve had to stop funding a program or something like that. It usually just means we need to find another way with that neighborhood to find the solution; take care of the problem that they are having that is making the program not function. And I’m more like, okay, maybe this can’t go from point a to point b the way that the others have but there is a route we can follow that will help this neighborhood so let’s work in that direction.

INTERVIEWER: Well that’s really interesting and great to hear. Well we have two questions left, and we’ve talked about pieces of some of these already. How can Main Street Programs grow or expand to include cultural enclaves and ethnically unique business districts in the city? And I know in Boston you already do that, so can you talk a little bit about how that has worked out with embracing some of the cultural elements in Boston?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I can. You know the two that come to mind, I guess one would be Chinatown and another one that sort has been created in the time that the Main Street Program is High
Jackson Square Main Street that now calls itself the Latin Quarter and I think that you know. I can tell you what the two biggest road blocks are. It’s really, having the capacity to make sure that we are you know providing things in various languages, that’s really, you know. I feel like we should have a better way to just you know have things translated and I feel like for us to come up with different programs and initiatives and then we can’t expect the directors to just take care of that. I know that there’s something that now comes up very frequently especially in the Latino areas, High Jackson Square Main Street and Engleson Square Main Street are the two that have the highest concentrations of Latino owned businesses and you know one of the first things. Now we have some very good directors who just turn to us to say “will this be available in Spanish” or “Will this be available to us in Cantonese?” or whatever. There are many languages. We are adding a main street with a huge population of Vietnamese and if we want their participation, this is what we have to do - in Fields Corner. Its just an area that, Vietnamese have moved to, lots of restaurants and things, the director there has just over a period of years just has learned that she needs to really be open to these new cultures and to being able to do things that are going to help bring them to the table to be a part of the organization. And in China Town one of the things I keep stressing is that we’re not going to get the same amount of buy-in when it comes to the city going into a neighborhood like that and saying “we have storefront improvement grants available up to $2000 or something like that and what you need to do is fill out this form and sign these five papers.” They’re still, there is still that divide of government and um, what the government wants from me and how much I should show the government and things like that. So I think that you know we try, I try to look at some of these neighborhoods as you know, their participation in storefront improvement is not as great as others its not because of a problem in that district or a problem with the director. Its really just
the reality of you know, it’s a cultural thing is what’s important to them. Its gonna take some
time to work with them and maybe it’s working with the newer businesses and some of the older
businesses will see the changes and you know come on board, that kind of thing.

INTERVIEWER: That’s really helpful and Orlando talked about some of the Latino districts and
that biggest hurdle was getting over that lack of trust in government....

RESPONDENT: I can say that I think that the city has helped somewhat in China Town. China
Town, a large portion of it is an historic district, so a lot of the storefront improvements we do or
signage we do goes through us so we have to make sure it gets approved. That can tend to
sometimes complicate things, you know periodically, and the fact that they have family
associations that are not what we would consider a retail store but its huge for the Chinese and
there are often, they actually often advertise with signage on their buildings that say the name of
the family association. And we’ve managed to work with the BRA on signage to allow things
like that in China Town and you know they are more sensitive to maybe the fact that they do
want red or they do want yellow. They don’t want certain colors that are culturally, you know,
certain colors mean more prosperity, that kind of thing. So you know we’re, to a degree growing,
and trying to work with them and say this is a cultural thing so we need to let this happen, and let
this happen because of where it is. And we will be sensitive to the fact that it might not
necessarily be okay in another district but here it’s okay.

INTERVIEWER: That flexibility and adaptation sounds like it’s good for others to embrace, and
that kind of leads us into this last question and I know that we have talked about capacity earlier
with fundraising and other things... Is there space in the Main Street Approach to add a capacity building step for long-struggling districts?

RESPONDENT: I definitely say, yes, yes there is. We’re actually just working with Matopan Square Main Street, it’s the last one we’ve approached, they’ve been interested over the years, but again I think there was a lack of capacity building to become a Main Street without sort of you know, really working through some real issues. We’ve been very used to a neighborhood that is all rallied around the same, you know mission, and things like that, and this particular neighborhood had a couple of different groups of people who felt that they, you know, were the ones who could, organize their Main Street better than the other. So for the first time, we actually had some competing organizations, so to us that meant that they needed to do a lot more work you know before we could designate them, so we did work with them. We tried to get them to look at the area they were trying to cover and trying to look at how they could be more successful. By the time we put out an RFP um, it was, I think we made it as clear as we could to them the different steps they were going to have to take for the city to actually designate them. And then once it happened, you know, we’ve been working with them, its coming up on probably a year i think in May, where we’ve been working with them just to get the organization really up and running. So applying for their 501c3, doing visioning, putting together a mission statement. I think a lot of other districts had a lot of that stuff, not completely done, cause certainly they’d have to wait for their 501c3 stuff. But I think we’ve been doing a lot of that with them in this first year. We are trying to tell the story to the community when the community is saying what’s going on with main street we haven’t seen any storefronts yet and we say thats coming but this is the piece that each main street has to go through. You know
sometimes somebody gets onto the board and then they find out this is taking more time than they thought, so you have these growing pains of people coming and going within the first year and you have to be careful that it doesn’t make it look like we have an unstable main street that can’t get along. So I’m always trying to make sure people understand that it’s normal for people to get involved and step down from a board or committee. Most because they feel like it’s more than they can give, and they have to let someone else step in. There’s always a little bit of that and then everything kind of settles and you get that right mix of people who know where they’re heading and the amount of time it takes and they’re willing to devote that.

So I do feel that an organization shouldn’t have to feel that they should open their doors, have four standing committees ready to go and all that. It really should and it does take more time than that and that as long as this organization is moving forward they shouldn’t feel that they are failing because they don’t have an ER committee yet. You know that’s sometimes the toughest committee to work on. It’s easier to do a promotion, to do an event, because it has a beginning and an end.

INTERVIEWER: So what you’re saying is that capacity building step already exists if you allow your lens of the main street approach to include it because working through the people you have and the capacity that’s already there, being patient is really part of the approach to begin with?

RESPONDENT: I think that it is. They’ve always said, I know main street is always talking about incremental steps, and I think. There’s incremental that can be too slow, but I think that word should be used. Only because I think people sometimes who are not as familiar with Main
Streets they feel like well, they’ve got all these volunteers, why aren’t they moving faster? And I try to say, yes, that’s right, they are volunteers! They aren’t being paid and life changes happen and people come and go and directors come and go and there’s always something that sometimes sets an organization back a little bit. You know if you really look at what happens with the businesses the same thing can happen too. So its really no different but i think sometimes people, and especially when there are federal funds flowing into something they may be looking for results quicker. Just so that people can show the value. And I think sometimes it takes a little time before you can then turn around and say that this is what’s happened in this community, the occupancy, or the vacancy rate has dropped. Like when Brighton, they had like a 50% vacancy rate, and if you go to Brighton now, it’s been a while for sure, in about a 10 year period they’re at a 1% vacancy rate. It didn’t happen overnight, it took time and you know once your organization was strong, then the storefronts came, the signage, the physical things that people can I don’t know how many people I’ve talked to who’ve said I can’t believe what Brighton looks like now, it’s phenomenal!

INTERVIEWER: That’s really great to hear, especially because you have the longevity to say stick with it.

RESPONDENT: Yeah! I still look at what I think, I think we talked about this before. The programs get 30k per year from the city, and when you look at that amount of money and you look at what’s happened, and what it costs a business to operate and be successful, that’s just such a drop in the bucket for what the return is, its really incredible to me that we have these directors who go up there and give it their all for, just because of their love of their community
and this kind of work, and you know, the amount of money they’re going home with on a weekly basis, the number of hours their working, its phenomenal, the number of hours they put in.

INTERVIEWER: It just shows that this approach has and requires a lifeblood and a passion when people buy in. Well, we thank you so much for taking the time, we really really appreciate it. Having your perspective makes our process whole, so thank you so much.

RESPONDENT: Sure! I’m glad we were able to connect and I wish you all the luck in finishing up your thesis!

INTERVIEWER: Thank you!
Appendix C

Interview Coding Schema and Coding Figures

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Figure 1: Interview Coding Schema
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Figure 4:1 Coding for responses to Interview Question 1
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<td>UE-Di</td>
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<td>UE-C</td>
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<td>“Main street is based on partnership with the public sector and so as far as disinvestment goes and crime and poverty, those issues, it’s just not an issue for a program alone to handle”</td>
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<td>UE-Su</td>
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<td>Not a word that comes up hardly at all when talking about Main Street - outside of scope</td>
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<td>UE-Di- localized, a particular block or property - but not meant to rebuild whole neighborhood</td>
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Figure 4.2 Coding for Responses to Interview Question 2
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<td>PR-BD (-) only one course of action available; silos</td>
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<td>overly involved, no solid boundaries or separation between politics and program implementation at times</td>
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<td>PR-P “So I have to keep telling all the districts to remember that they’re Switzerland”</td>
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<td>PR-P commissioners use districts to help them get re-elected</td>
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<td>UE-MC</td>
<td>Lack of trust in government</td>
<td>CS-Ca CS-MC</td>
<td>PR-P; PR-BD “There are times when what my agency is doing is actually in conflict with what my program is intended to do”</td>
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<td>CS (+)(-)</td>
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<td>“It’s very positive for us to be the city government who is actually facilitating this program in the neighborhoods.”</td>
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<td>PR(-)(-)</td>
<td>Fundraising when city is major source of funds. Asks outside of normal nonprofits from city</td>
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<td>PR-P</td>
<td>“And because it was sort of born from the city, we do ask them to do things that I don’t</td>
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<td>CS-Ca “A good red flag” - coordination, program recognition, cooperation</td>
<td>PR-P (+)</td>
<td>“Here in Boston I don’t believe a city councilor would put their neck out and do that because its too connected to the mayor, it really is.”</td>
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Figure 4.3 Coding for Responses to Interview Question 3
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<td></td>
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<td>“We have something called the Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative (NPI) and it is essentially the same idea they just don’t have to operate as a Main Street Program”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-MC(+)</td>
<td>UE-MC(+)</td>
<td>PR-MC</td>
<td>“It’s really, having the capacity to make sure that we are, you know, providing things in various languages...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-Ca</td>
<td>UE-Ca</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR-MC</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is still that divide of government, what the government wants from me and how much I should shoe the government”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family associations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UE-MC Flexibility!</td>
<td>“So we’re, to a degree, growing, and trying to work with them and say this is a cultural thing so we need to let this happen, and let this happen because of where it is. And we will be sensitive to the fact that it might not necessarily be okay in another district, but here it’s okay”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.4 Coding for Responses to Interview Question 4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FP</th>
<th>UE</th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FP-P Volunteer Incentives</td>
<td>UE-De</td>
<td>CS-Ca</td>
<td>PR-MC</td>
<td>density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-Co</td>
<td>&quot;Turf Issues&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP-O Volunteer Recruitment</td>
<td>UE-MC</td>
<td>CS-De</td>
<td>PR-FB</td>
<td>Regional approaches?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP-O Nonprofit training</td>
<td>CS-V(-)(+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>passion, leadership development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS-Ca</td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban v. rural example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP-A Nonprofit management</td>
<td>UE-De</td>
<td>CS-De</td>
<td>PR-FB(-)</td>
<td>&quot;The difference is literally the density issues&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP-O</td>
<td></td>
<td>CS-Co</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;[D]ensity, which makes the competition impossible for funding and for volunteers&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP-O nonprofit management; economic development focus</td>
<td>UE-Di UE-P</td>
<td>CS-Ca CS-Su</td>
<td>PR-MC</td>
<td>Five different pre-trainings required for NPI programs (outside of Main Street)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| FP-A Expand Frame | | | | "So, today its about economic development, jobs, thats what its about. Driving communities, opportunities for new business, so that is the piece that on this question I think is the most critical."
| | CS-Ca(+ | | | "I definitely say yes, yes there is space (for a capacity building step)"
<p>| FP-O 501c3/nonprofit preparation, visioning, mission development, etc. | CS-Co | CS-Ca Internal to individual districts | | |
| FP-O | CS-Ca | Flexibility | | There’s always a little bit of uncertainty before everything settles in and districts feel like they know where they are headed. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FP- O Incrementalism</th>
<th>CS-V (+) (-)</th>
<th>“They’ve always said, I know Main Street is always talking about incremental steps and I think there’s incremental that can be too slow, but I think that word should be used. Only because I think people sometimes who are not as familiar with Main Street they fell like, well, they’ve got all these volunteers, why aren’t they moving faster? And I try to say yes, that’s right, they’re volunteers! They aren’t being paid and life changes happen and people come and go...”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CS(+)</td>
<td>PR- Longevity and proof that program works over time</td>
<td>50% vacancy rate to 1% vacancy rate example over 10 years of hard work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS-V CS (+)</td>
<td>PR-FB (+)</td>
<td>Investment is drop in the bucket</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5 Coding for Responses to Interview Question 5
Appendix D

Citywide Main Street Density Maps

Figure 5.1 Boston Density Map (US Census 2010)
Figure 5.2 Baltimore Density Map (US Census 2010)
Figure 5.3 Washington DC Density Map (US Census 2010)
Figure 5.4 Orlando Density Map (US Census 2010)
Figure 5.5 Portland Density Map (US Census 2010)