PLACE MAKING VERSUS PLACE MARKETING:
IMPLICATIONS OF THE MAIN STREET APPROACH TO
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Place Making versus Place Marketing:
Implications of the Main Street Approach to Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization

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Renewed attention to neighborhood commercial revitalization in the United States represents a holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization and the recognition of small business in the local economy. As tourism and real estate development become central elements in the new urban economy, these neighborhood shopping districts also carry potential utilitarian value as "sense of place" becomes an important amenity to attract visitors and potential residents. Using the Baltimore Main Streets program as a case study, this dissertation explores the increasing attention from the local government in organizing commercial revitalization activities using the "Main Street Approach". Through a mixed-method approach, this study situates the popularity of the program in the neoliberal context and examines the program implementation and potential impact. The popularity of this program in cities is built upon its four targeted
areas of change—design, promotion, organization and economic restructuring—by engaging the third sector in economic development at the very local level, primarily through historic preservation and event promotion. The program responds to the neoliberal market-oriented context where competition and self-help are essential to achieve institutional and economic efficiency. As a city-wide program, Baltimore Main Streets provides opportunities to incorporate small businesses into city’s economic development agenda. By developing a Main Street typology, my research reveals the capacity to achieve full program implementation is highly shaped by the socio-economic conditions of the neighborhoods. Yet with an emphasis on historic preservation, special events, and volunteer participation, this particular approach to commercial revitalization has the potential to promote growth and “open up” neighborhoods to middle-class residents and potential investors. By examining property appreciation, I found that program activities may signal that an area is ready to change and therefore boost the desirability of the neighborhood on the real estate market. To make Main Street a true place-making strategy beyond place promotion, it requires the recognition of neighborhood structural difference and allocates resource accordingly to revitalize the districts in all dimensions.
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Dedication

To

My parents

Sung-Shan Chang 張松山 and Mei-Se Wu 吳美瑟

Your fifty-year-old business on Main Street of Taoyuan, Taiwan is where my interest in commercial revitalization began.

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You made my life outside of the dissertation research so much fun and meaningful.

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Mommy would never overcome my perfection and procrastination to finish without your timely arrival.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Commercial district revitalization in the United States is traditionally considered to be dominated by the interests of business groups. Such ideology has changed during the past two decades, however, particularly in neighborhood business districts. Cities and community-based organizations have started focusing on neighborhood commercial revitalization as a tool for neighborhood revitalization that goes beyond housing development, as they believe that a healthy commercial district is essential for both community rebuilding and local economic development. Community intermediaries such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) now provide resources and funding support for neighborhood commercial revitalization. And, cities across the United States initiate different strategies and financial mechanisms such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and tax increment financing (TIF) to help sustain neighborhood commercial revitalization efforts.

Why is there a greater interest in neighborhood commercial revitalization as a community development strategy today? This phenomenon can be viewed from two perspectives: the communities’ perspective and the local governments’ perspective. First, from a grassroots’ perspective, neighborhood commercial revitalization represents a comprehensive approach to community rebuilding and
A deteriorated commercial district is usually associated with a deteriorated residential neighborhood. Inner city neighborhood commercial districts have declined during the past forty years due to factors such as population loss, demographic change and competition with suburban shopping malls. As many neighborhoods have started to experience revitalization through housing development, more attention has been placed on invigorating these shopping districts to complement nearby residential revitalization efforts.

Commercial district revitalization will bring a more positive image to the area and, at the same time, assist a community’s economic development. Besides these physical and economic benefits, commercial revitalization will also generate social and psychological benefits. For example, the notable Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston has addressed the importance of commercial district revitalization in their concept of the “urban village”:

The urban village would give Dudley a center and strengthen an identity unique to the neighborhood with all of its diverse cultural traditions. The urban village concept was also a design solution to the concern of Dudley residents about safety. . . . A village center with shops, open space and housing built around it would enhance the security of Dudley residents with “eyes on the street.” (ibid, 297)

Revitalizing the commercial district will provide diverse amenities, such as places to walk, socialize and shop. At the same time, traditional commercial space will help nurture local entrepreneurs, creating jobs and local ownership. Once streets are safe, they are more likely to become public spaces for the neighborhood, provide a sense of place and create community identity.
From a city’s perspective, a healthy neighborhood district has many benefits. To begin, it is an economic development strategy to increase tax revenue and foster small business development. In many cases, neighborhood physical, social, or cultural characteristics become the competitive advantage for place marketing to attract capital investment. Increasing demand for tourism development and space for cultural consumption has made some neighborhood shopping streets tourist destinations. For example, Canal Street in Chinatown, New York recently incorporated a tourist information booth with other street improvements in an effort to encourage Chinese communities participating in the tourism business and to help economic recovery in the Lower Manhattan area. Supporting neighborhood commercial revitalization also helps city officials gain political support by engaging communities in local economic development and improves the overall economy in cites.

Both communities’ and cities’ perspectives have been intertwined to fuel the increasing emphasis on neighborhood commercial revitalization. However, critics have argued that many so-called “revitalized” neighborhood commercial districts consist of nothing but “street beautifications” that provide flowerpots, new street pavement and banners. While quality of life may be improved by such physical improvements, their effects on jobs and business development are questionable. In addition, new businesses that move into traditional shopping districts are often specialty retail stores and restaurants, which provide only limited employment and service provision benefits to lower income residents.
In addition, revitalization efforts in neighborhood commercial districts can speed up residential migration and neighborhood change. As suggested by Smith (2002), the latest wave of gentrification is featured by no longer ad-hoc, unorganized incidents. Gentrification today has become a global strategy for urban revitalization that combines corporate, state powers and practices. Amenities such as walkable streets and places to shop become part of the package to attract the middle-upper class back to the cities. The improvement of the neighborhood commercial district is a quality of life consideration, but the characteristics of neighborhood commerce represent a symbol of neighborhood lifestyle (Deener 2007). New specialty stores can become a theme for neighborhood promotion and public characters for gentrification (Patch 2008). A working class neighborhood called Hampden in Baltimore, Maryland has been promoted as a destination for working women professionals due to a newly opened restaurant on the neighborhood commercial corridor. The giant pink flamingo on the building façade, nostalgic decor and the annual make-up contest that celebrates the fashion style of working women in the 50s-60s have made the restaurant a new landmark of Hampden. It not only attracts tourists but also draws similarly themed new business development such as gift shops and antique stores. Furthermore, it creates a phenomenon of a new migration to the neighborhood. New demand on housing is driven by young woman professionals who feel safe here (Steinberg 2002). The economic function and symbolic meaning of a neighborhood commercial district on lifestyle consumption and gentrification are amplified as land development becomes an important sector in the new urban economy (Smith 2002). Neighborhood commercial districts,
where “sense of place” is often produced and consumed, are not only assets for the local cultural or tourism industry but also important elements for real estate development.

The effect of neighborhood commercial revitalization has become controversial because neighborhood characteristics may change along with physical and economic improvements. As a result, commercial revitalization is neither creating social cohesiveness nor rebuilding the commercial district for the community as a whole. Social conflict may emerge as new storefronts become the frontier for residential and commercial gentrification, possibly resulting in the displacement of long-time residents. Neighborhood commercial revitalization, therefore, is a contested process that is embedded within neighborhood change and the urban economy.

Despite growing attention from practitioners, neighborhood commercial revitalization has been largely neglected by academia (Koebel 2001; Seidman 2002). As an aspect of place-making efforts, the success of commercial revitalization has often been celebrated by the planning discipline. It is only recently that sociologists have begun to examine the subject of neighborhood commerce, the process of revitalization and the relationship between commerce and other social actors in the neighborhood (see Zukin and Kosta 2004; Sutton 2006; Lloyd 2006; Deener 2007; Patch 2008; Zukin et al. 2009; Zukin 2010). This work has focused on the process of commercial revitalization as a consequence of market forces rather than a government intervention (except Zukin et al. 2009).
My research intends to fill this void with a particular focus on state-initiated neighborhood commercial revitalization. This study will focus on a popular program called “Main Street Approach,” a preservation-based commercial district revitalization strategy. The Main Street program features a model called the “Four-Point Approach” that includes four target areas of change: Design, Promotion, Organization and Economic Restructuring. The purpose of this dissertation is to discover the social, political-economic, and cultural influences on the growing interest in using the Main Street model for inner-city neighborhood commercial revitalization, both theoretically and empirically. In particular, I use neoliberalism as the policy framework to examine the opportunities and challenges this model brings to commercial revitalization and its potential effects on neighborhood change at large.

Outline of Work

This dissertation may at first appear to be a program evaluation of the Main Street program, which includes an introduction to the program (Chapter 3), a process evaluation of its implementation (Chapter 4) and an outcome evaluation of its effects on neighborhood real estate markets (Chapter 5). However, my goal is to situate the program as a popular public policy of neighborhood commercial revitalization in the larger structural changes of the city and examine why this particular “Four-Point Approach” formula appeals to city officials in the neoliberal context. Therefore, the outline of my dissertation is as follows.
Chapter 2 provides a review of literature, research questions and methodology. The first part of the literature review focuses on the “program”—Main Street—and how it is different from other neighborhood commercial revitalization strategies. The second part of the literature review uses Main Street’s “Four-Points Approach” to lay out the underlying strategies and theories that this commercial revitalization program incorporates and examines its popularity in the current social-economic-political context. I explore how these four areas of change intertwine the roles commercial revitalization plays in the neighborhood with global-cultural forces. Three research questions are presented in this chapter as the follows.

1. Why is the Main Street Approach a popular strategy for inner city neighborhood commercial revitalization? What are the challenges or opportunities of this program’s approach to commercial revitalization in the neoliberal context?

2. How do neighborhood socio-economic variations play out in the implementation of this particular program in commercial district revitalization?

3. Does the Main Street Approach to commercial revitalization have any effect on neighborhood at large? In particular, does the program have any impact on the neighborhood real estate market?

A mixed-method approach is taken to answer these research questions. The first and second research questions are answered by evidence gathered through a qualitative methodology that combines document reviews, observations, direct participation and in-depth interviews with program officials, Main Streets managers and residents. Evidence on the third research question is presented mostly through a quantitative methodology, mainly using a regression analysis to
test the potential effects of Main Street program commercial revitalization on real estate markets. To compare neighborhood differences and contextualize variation from a city-wide perspective, GIS technology such as thematic mapping and spatial data integration is used in this research to provide additional qualitative descriptions and quantitative measurements of the studied areas.

In Chapter 3 I focus on the first research question and take a critical perspective on the implementation of Baltimore Main Streets programs at the macro-level. I begin with a brief introduction of Urban Main Streets, to understand why the Main Street model is adopted in large cities and the variations that exist from city to city. Following this introduction are an overview of the Baltimore Main Streets program and a discussion of how neighborhood commercial revitalization has evolved over time in Baltimore. In the final section of the chapter, I use neoliberalism as the framework to examine how the Baltimore Main Streets program, as a public policy for commercial revitalization, reflects the popular discourse on entrepreneurship, economic development, competitiveness, partnership and efficiency.

With a focus on the second research question, I examine the implementation of the Main Street program at a micro (neighborhood) level in Chapter 4. I compare how the program is implemented in different neighborhood socio-economic contexts to highlight the potential social-spatial inequality embedded in this neoliberal policy. The evidence is presented by grouping neighborhoods into three typologies—competitive, transitional and redevelopment—and examining how implementation of each of the program’s
"Four Points" differs by neighborhood type. This chapter ends with a discussion of the challenges and opportunities of the Main Street program as a neoliberal policy and whether or not commercial gentrification is the inevitable consequence in the process of revitalization.

Chapter 5 presents a quantitative analysis of the effects of commercial revitalization on the studied neighborhoods at large. To answer this third research question, I use real estate market activities, specifically property sales and value changes, as empirical measurements of neighborhood change. I use these measures, on both commercial and residential properties, to compare Main Street and non-Main Street neighborhoods. Different Main Street neighborhoods are also compared to one another using these measures of neighborhood change. Both property assessment value and sale value are used to test the association of property appreciation with Main Street designation. To highlight how these effects vary by neighborhood socio-economic context, I use hedonic regression to examine the relationship between property appreciation rate and neighborhood attributes such as race, income, crime and vacancy. At the end of the chapter, four different validity threats are discussed to point out the potential biases in this analysis.

Research Impact

In conducting this research I sought to trigger interest on several fronts. First, I want to bring attention to neighborhood commercial districts as an
important subject of study in urban research. Studies of urban revitalization and urban change tend to be dichotomous, focusing on either downtowns or neighborhoods. I want to point out the potential impact of commercial revitalization on neighborhoods and its role in the urban revitalization/redevelopment process. In particular, I want to examine how neighborhood commercial revitalization fits into the emerging trend of retail development in cities, not only for the purpose of small business development but also as a place-based strategy for gentrification and real estate development.

In addition, the adaptation of the Main Street program in cities is not only due to its success in small towns but is also related to the changing role of neighborhoods and cities in leisure-tourism development and land development in the post-industrial, symbolic economy (Zukin 1995). To understand the potential impact of the Main Street program requires not only an examination of the program as an economic strategy but also an analysis of how the program elements interplay with other structural changes. Meanwhile, with its growing popularity as a public policy for commercial revitalization, Main Street programs, or any preservation-based approach, deserve a close examination of their implications for urban revitalization. Advocating the economic benefits of historic preservation is no longer sufficient for a policy evaluation. Rather, a policy evaluation requires a sound theoretical framework and more empirical evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, on the process and outcomes of program implementation. My research intends to provide some of this empirical evidence.
Chapter 2

Main Street Four Point Approach and Structural Changes of Cities

In this chapter I provide a literature review of the Main Street program and situate its popular “Four-Point Approach” within the structural changes of cities. The first section includes a brief overview of the Main Street program, its popularity as a commercial revitalization strategy and its status as an understudied subject in scholarly research. The second section focuses on an analysis of the “Four-Points Approach” and tries to situate the Main Street program in the body of literature on urban revitalization and redevelopment. Using neoliberalism as a policy framework, I attempt to evaluate the Main Street program as a public policy and its implications in the urban context as a place-based economic development strategy. Based on the literature review, I present three research questions and hypotheses. These research questions guide this dissertation study to address (1) why the Main Street program is popular in the urban context; (2) how it is implemented from neighborhood to neighborhood; and (3) what the impacts of the Main Street program are on neighborhoods at large. I adopt a mixed-method approach and use case study research on
Baltimore to answer these questions. Details of my methodology are presented in the last part of this chapter.

The Main Street Program and Four-Point Approach

The Main Street program is a preservation-based commercial district revitalization model that was created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the largest preservation advocacy organization in the United States.1 The National Main Street Center (NMSC) was established by the Trust in 1979 with a mission to revitalize historical and traditional commercial areas by using historic preservation and a grass-roots-based economic development approach (National Main Street Center website 2011). The model was initially implemented in small town and rural settings. During the past two decades, this model has been used in over seventeen hundred urban and rural communities and has become one of the most popular place-based approaches to commercial revitalization for traditional commercial areas. Forty-six states have funded statewide Main Street programs and contracted with NMSC to provide technical assistance to participating local communities (Seidman 2004).

The Main Street program features a model called the “Four Point Approach,” which emphasizes four target areas of change: Design, Promotion, Economic

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1 The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a leading advocacy organization focused on historic preservation in the United States. Created by congressional charter in 1949, it was originally funded by the federal government but became an independent, private non-for-profit organization in 1998. It has focused not only on saving historic buildings, but also on urban revitalization and economic development.
Restructuring and Organization. The goal of this model is to improve all aspects of the traditional business district through historic preservation and community collaboration, as well as economic development. While these four points provide the format for the program, there are also eight principles that guide the process of revitalization in the Main Street program: Comprehensive, Incremental, Self-Help, Public-Private Partnership, Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets, Quality, Change and Implementation Oriented. These factors reinforce the idea that commercial revitalization is a comprehensive, long-term process that requires planning, patience, and collective effort from the grassroots (National Main Street Center 2011a; 2011b).

To become an active Main Street, an organization needs to be involved in four types of activities, which are the four points of Main Street model: design, promotion, organization and economic restructuring. Some of these activities may seem similar to the functions of a business association, or a business improvement district (BID), which participates in joint advertising and promotion. The fundamental difference of this model is the emphasis on “the sense of place”, which is ultimately the goal of a preservationist in commercial district revitalization.

“Design” is about improving visual appearance of the district by utilizing all the physical elements of the districts with high quality design. Quality design, in this context, is against those modernization practices that occurred since the era of urban renewal. Because the program was designed by preservationists, revealing the architectural details of the traditional commercial buildings and
preserving the physical coherence of the districts are considered keys to preserve a community’s sense of place. At the same time, it is about educating merchants about design, via the concepts of public space and private storefronts, as a strategy to make the area distinct from others.

“Promotion”, in a Main Street practice, usually involves in three types of activities: retail promotions, special events, and image development. While retail promotion such as sales events targets existing and potential shoppers, special events such as festivals are planned with a larger audience in mind, to promote the commercial district as a place for enjoyment, to create a positive image that attracts visitors, new business, developers, and investors. Image development aims to change the perception of the place and enhance the community’s image via advertising campaigns, logo design, tours or open houses. The goal is to “create a positive image of the commercial district in order to rekindle community pride” (Baltimore Main Streets 2004a). What makes a Main Street promotion different from the traditional promotional event of a business association, is that it rebuilds the commercial space not only a place to shop, but to play in, as well as a symbol of community pride.

“Organization” is about the formal organization that implements the Main Street model but also about the grassroots organizing. Activities involved in “organization” include both internal responsibilities to keep an organization running but also the external organizational responsibility to increase the organization’s capacities. Capacity building often includes volunteer recruitment, fund-raising activities, seeking public/private partnerships, and building a
broader base of support within the community. Therefore, commercial revitalization is no longer a domain exclusively driven by business interest, but a collaborative effort of residents, merchants, investors, local politicians, and other community stakeholders. Sense of place, in this case, is achieved socially through community organizing and volunteer participation.

“Economic Restructuring” is the last point, but probably the key to success since the sense of place of a commercial district cannot be achieved without vital economic activities. The idea of economic restructuring involves three of objectives: business retention, business recruitment and property development. The purpose of business retention is working with existing business to expand their customer base and improve their business skills. Business recruitment, on the other hand, tries to reach out to recruit business to serve existing customers, and to diversify the current mix and develop a potential niche market. Property development utilizes unused building for other activities, such as housing. This objective is often not taken up by a merchant association, but is important to a Main Street, since any vacancy will jeopardize the vitality of a place. These objectives seek to put the district on a sound footing by strengthening current economic assets while diversifying the economic base of the district.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach is a preservation-based approach which identifies and capitalizes on the existing assets of the community. By focusing on these four areas of change, the model focuses on every aspect of capacity building, from physical to economic restructuring, and aims to comprehensively revitalize the commercial district. But the level of
comprehensiveness should be also realistic to create confidence and allow a greater level of participation. The Four-Point Approach incorporates a process of change, which often requires change of attitude among stakeholders as well as a change in how things operate. It emphasizes that the process of change should be incremental, to allow the organization to build its capacity and focus on the quality rather than the quantity of the change. The fundamental principle is to “take it slow.” Small improvements can have big consequences, and at the same time they can help to make change more manageable (Seidman 2004).

Main Street Approach - An Under-Studied Subject

With more than fifteen hundred participating localities, the National Trust’s Main Street program is one of the most popular commercial revitalization strategies in the United States. However, scholarly research devoted to the Main Street program has been surprisingly thin (Robertson 2004). The existing literature is mainly descriptive and mostly consists of in-house reports published by the National Trust Main Street Center that serve the purpose of promotion and advocacy (ibid.). Professional reports on Main Streets focus on program adaptation to define best practices in the realm of commercial revitalization (Seidman 2004; Murphy and Cunningham 2003; Kemp 2000). Despite the increasing number of theses and dissertations on program implementation that have attempted to fill this void, most of these works are prescriptive rather than analytical. Finally, given the history of the program, most of these studies are
geographically focused on small towns, with less emphasis on urban neighborhoods.

Studies from National Trust Main Street Center have mainly focused on the economic impact of Main Streets. The Trust has tracked the economic impacts on participant communities since 1980 as a means of measuring of the program’s success (Gates 2005). Because the economic benefits of preservation were not recognized in the early 1980s, the main purpose of these studies to provide proof of the economic viability of the program specifically and historic preservation in general. Spending on historic preservation is quantified in dollar terms as a way to measure the program’s impact on other economic activities such as building rehabilitation, new business and jobs. This method, however, is potentially biased given that it attributes all the change to Main Street and does not take into account other factors present in the local and regional economy that may have caused positive results (Gates 2005; Ozdil 2006). Even so, these studies have proven to be popular and useful as rhetorical aids that help sell preservation to public officials and decision makers (Mason 2005). As a result, they have shaped the standard format for how the Main Street program reports its “stories of success” nationwide.

As historic preservation has gained popularity as a policy and planning strategy for downtown revitalization, there has been an increasing number of comparative studies on Main Street program implementation. Robertson’s (2004) study was the first and only peer-reviewed Main Street study that focused on the implementation of the Four Points Approach in forty downtowns in the United
States. Using a combination of surveys, observations and interviews, his research focused on the implementation of program’s four emphasized areas and concluded that promotion is consistently the most heavily-utilized component, followed by design. The emphasis on design is also found in Ozdil’s (2006) dissertation on Texas’s state-wide Main Street program. Gates (2005) took another perspective on program evaluation and examined communities that exited the program. Some of the program failures are attributed to the rigid program format (e.g. the Four Points Approach) while others are due to unrealistic results and expectations of individual organizations. However, “Organization” is generally the crucial component that contributes most to program failure in local communities. These works have helped to diversify the perspectives on existing Main Street literature.

As the model was designed for small cities and towns, the current literature is largely focused on the evaluation of the program and its implications in rural Main Streets and small downtowns. In regard to the implementation of the Main Street program in urban neighborhoods, literature has mainly been contributed by Seidman (2001, 2002, 2004) and his students (see Strong and Stroud 2002; Torre 2005) in the past decade. In two reports funded by the Fannie Mae Foundation, Seidman (2002) compares the Main Street model with other inner-city commercial revitalization strategies and discusses the adaptation of the Main Street program in the urban context. Through case studies of four different urban Main Street organizations in different cities, Seidman suggests that the Main Street model is an effective tool for urban neighborhood commercial
revitalization as it offers a comprehensive revitalization approach and gains greater support from the community at large. The well-established network of resources, training and technical assistance provided by the National Trust Main Street Center makes the model easy to copy and implement (Seidman 2004, 4). He also notes that specific urban issues (e.g. political structures, socio-economic characteristics and high crime rates) have created some challenges for the adaptation of the Main Street approach in inner cities. But, urban characteristics such as ethnic diversity can be unique assets for promotional efforts (Torre 2005). These studies address the practicality of Main Street in the urban context and the challenges and opportunities associated with program adaptation. The majority of these case studies are geographically concentrated in Boston areas where Main Street was first implemented as a city-wide neighborhood commercial revitalization policy.

Given its widespread use, Main Street represents an under-studied area in urban research. Impact studies by the National Trust Main Street Center demonstrate the economic benefits of the program with the goal of advocating for historic preservation. As aforementioned, several independent studies on Main Street began to focus on the assessment of program implementation and found that the program is not as comprehensive as it was designed to be in the implementation of each of the points. Studies of Main Streets in cities are practitioner-driven and focused on defining the practice of neighborhood commercial revitalization. Therefore, the Main Street program’s impacts, both
economic and non-economic, and implications in urban neighborhoods present a gap to fill in the academic literature.

Theoretical Framework:

Main Street’s Four-Point Philosophy and Structural Changes of Cities

Neither the Main Street phenomenon nor the subject of neighborhood commercial revitalization has received much attention in the academic literature. Neighborhood commercial revitalization is perceived as part of neighborhood-based economic development, a practice arising out of decades of community organizing and antipoverty efforts led by community development corporations (CDCs) and neighborhood groups since the 1960s. According to a book chapter by Wiewel and others (Wiewel, Teitz, and Giloth 1993) on neighborhood-based economic development, the practice has been based on such politically-charged theoretical concepts as “black capitalism” and “neighborhood empowerment” as well as on mainstream economic theories drawn from regional and international development (ibid., 80). The authors suggest that there are four bodies of theoretical work relevant to understanding neighborhood economic development: market-based theory of urban ecology, Marxian approach to class and production, urban politics and growth machine theory (Logan and Molotch 1987) and sociological community theories. However, they also suggested that all of these theories lack comprehensiveness, either considering neighborhoods as the accidental results of a market-driven process or ignoring the external political-
economic constraints on neighborhood development (Wiewel, Teitz, and Giloth 1993, 84).

Four-Point Approach, Four Contradicting Strategies?

The aforementioned theories of neighborhood economic development reflect, to a certain degree, on the philosophy of the Main Street Approach, which is the Four Point-model that includes design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring. The concept of “promotion” reveals the ideology of civic boosterism and the theory of the urban growth machine (Logan and Molotch 1987). Civic boosters usually are land-based and business-led elites such as banks, media, real estate developers, utilities, and department stores who believe that growth is good and creating a good business environment is important. Presenting neighborhood commercial districts in a positive light is important for attracting new business investment. Promoting a theme for a commercial district helps to sell growth in the area. The fundamental ideology that drives neighborhood change, according to this theory, is the emphasis on the exchange value of place over its use value, or seeing the neighborhood as a commodity rather than a place to live. These coalitions (the machine), tied to the economic possibilities of place, drive urban polities in their quest to expand the local economy and accumulate wealth (Firey 1945; Jonas and Wilson 1999). In this context, the neighborhood commercial district is considered land to be developed for its highest and best use. It will be revitalized as long as there is additional rent to be gained. However, promotion and treating places as commodities may
conflict with the other two elements in the Main Street Approach, organization and design, both of which support the goals of community development and historic preservation.

Community development and historic preservation are traditionally perceived as two community-based forces working against the growth machine from the bottom-up. They emerged in the mid-1970s as part of new social and environmental movements to challenge the activities of land-based elites (Jonas and Wilson 1999). Community members view use value as more important than exchange value. Non-economic factors, such as resident sentiment, symbolism and social networks, also bind people to their neighborhood. Sociological community theorists such as communitarian theorists assume that neighborhood revitalization and community-based economic development is a matter of coordinating efforts (Pitkin 2001). People are the agents of change who can determine the fate a place if they organize and build social capital (Bolton 1992; Wiewel, Teitz, and Giloth 1993).

Unlike community development, historic preservation has often been perceived as a force to block development because a preservationist may consider the historic value of a physical structure more important than the economic value of the land. In the growth machine model, re-imaging cities usually results in physical reconstruction (Short 1999) to extract new value from the land. Preservation, in this context, was used as an anti-redevelopment strategy in the 60s and 70s because preservation law is one of the legal tools that can be used to prevent buildings from destruction. Especially in the United States,
preservationists built coalitions with local communities to save neighborhoods from demolition due to highway construction and large-scale federal subsidized housing projects during the post-war era (Teaford 2000).

The fourth point in the Main Street Approach, economic restructuring, is probably the linchpin that enables these contradictory elements to work together in one program. The decline and revival of neighborhood commercial districts is not simply due to the failure or success in negotiating the hierarchical market system of the local economy. It is also embedded in other structural factors—such as political, economic and cultural forces—that have fundamentally changed the urban structure and economy. These forces, driven by globalization, urban restructuring and local politics, also influence the ways in which community development and historic preservation work together to control or promote urban growth.

*The Popularity of the Main Street Approach vs. Structural Changes of Cities*

The Main Street Approach was not always recognized as a feasible method of commercial revitalization. When the National Trust for Historic Preservation first launched its Main Street Pilot Project in late 1975, the program encountered a great deal of opposition, especially from local merchants and property owners. In Alison Isenberg’s (2004) book on the history of downtown America, she relates that in the 60s and 70s business people’s eyes often glazed over at the mention of preservation because it contradicted merchants’ and property owners’ “decades-long commitment to modernization” (ibid., 297). Main Street’s later
success can be attributed to the continuous efforts of the National Trust. These efforts included advocacy, lobbying, and providing sponsorships to hundreds of small-town and big-city commercial preservation initiatives. Through these efforts, the National Trust garnered political and financial support behind the idea of preservation as an economic development tool. But the grassroots effort from the Trust alone was not the only contributor to its victory. Also at play were the changing cultural, political and economic forces that American cities experienced in the 1980s and 1990s that generated the nostalgia that facilitated the success of the Main Street program in cities.

*Economic Restructuring and the Cultural Value of Cities*

Urban restructuring in the global economy has shifted the roles of preservation and inner city neighborhoods in the late twentieth century. Cities have changed their function from centers of production to centers of consumption. In response to the growing market of urban tourism and the new service-based economy, cities are promoted as places to live and visit through the construction of recreational, retail and entertainment facilities as well as luxury housing. In the era of globalization, “place identity” has become an important tool to promote a city and distinguish it from its competition. This phenomenon places a new emphasis on culture in the redevelopment process. Additionally, historic preservation has been identified as an important element of a new postmodern (Harvey 1989) or symbolic economy (Zukin 1995) in which cultural
strategies drive the production of commercialized urban spaces geared toward entertainment and tourism.

Zukin (1995) points out that historic preservation today is not just about protecting history, but is rather a visual strategy with a set of architectural themes to promote a culture to sell urban growth. The relationship between historic preservation and community in this global environment is no longer just about preserving a neighborhood from demolition. Instead, historic preservation is used to create a sense of place with commercialized cultural value. Many cities use the preservation strategy to promote neighborhood character and ethnic pride, developing small districts around specific themes to represent the culture of the city for tourism development. Using culture, regardless of whether it is high-end or popular culture or based on ethnic or class differences, has become the new trend in developing niche markets for selling diversity. In contrast to the Fordist paradigm of mass production for mass markets, this type of cultural-based niche development reflects the restructuring of production, marketing and consumption that has been characterized as post-Fordist, where diversity of consumer products and niche-marketing are emphasized (Hoffman 2003). Neighborhoods, in this changing context, have opportunities to engage in the new economy through cultural production.

**Preservation as a Pro-Growth Strategy**

In an increasingly global economy, historic preservation and community development become new strategies for selling urban growth. The significance of
historic preservation, specifically in the United States, extends beyond its value as a cultural product to a political strategy for redevelopment. The failure of urban renewal not only destroyed the existing physical and social fabric of urban communities, but also created social problems rather than a new image of the city with opportunities. Having a vision for the future was no longer fashionable for planners, architects, government officials, or even developers. To avoid association with the negative image of urban renewal, they “spoke increasingly of the need to respect the urban context and the merits of preserving older structures and the existing street patterns.” (Teaford 2000, 461) Having to work with the existing fabric became the mainstream value for development, and Jane Jacobs was the leader of this concept.

Jane Jacobs celebrated existing buildings and street patterns, and emphasized the importance of the elements that constitute vibrant urban life. The ideas expressed in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* were to become the new planning orthodoxy of the late 20th century. She argued that “the forms in which money is used must be concerted to instruments of regeneration—from instruments buying violent cataclysms to instruments buying continual, gradual, complex and gentler change.” (Jacobs 1961, 317) Her voice was not only echoed by the residents whose communities were destroyed, but also by populists who demanded slower change. As a land use law, historic designation can help prevent aggressive demolition. Within this context, the historic preservation movement attracted a growing army of supporters from
residents, community activists, preservationists, design and planning professionals (Teaford 2000).

The restructuring of federal policy also enhanced the importance of historic preservation in the urban redevelopment process. Reichl (1997) addressed the political significance of historic preservation as a development approach. After the failure of urban renewal, the federal government withdrew its assistance for new housing construction and increased the funds allocated for rehabilitation projects. The Community Development Block Grant and Urban Development Action Grant Programs and the Tax Reform Act of 1976 provided resources and financial incentives for preservation-based projects (ACHP 1978; Reichl 1997, 518). It was found that neighborhoods with distinguished architectural characteristics were especially popular in attracting the middle class “back to the city.” Assisted by these federal subsidies, preservation became one of the popular place-based strategies to attract reinvestment back into distressed inner-city neighborhoods. More importantly, it was a political strategy to lower the community opposition to redevelopment. By emphasizing context and physical characteristics, historic preservation helps reunify urban pro-growth coalitions (Reichl 1997), which were broken down after urban renewal.

The nostalgic, symbolic meaning of “Main Street” is something that other commercial revitalization strategies do not have. The purpose of the program is not simply to attract shoppers from other neighborhoods or suburbs. It holds something symbolic to the communities. It brings people back to the good old days of Main Street shopping, and the nostalgia helps construct their identities. It
is not a shopping space but a public space for the community. The civility of “Main Street” encourages participation and generates the energy necessary for change. It amplifies the idea of commercial revitalization as part of place making efforts. To future businesses or investors, it represents a place that has something unique to offer. Using “Main Street” reinforces a community’s attempt to recreate an identity and a sense of community. At the same time, it is the marketplace that promotes consumption. Using the Main Street Approach in the urban context is not only about preserving the physical characteristics of neighborhood commercial corridors. The use of “Main Street” to promote the urban commercial core reinforces attempts to create the symbolic economy on the neighborhood scale. Main Street itself is a symbol. It represents a place with personalized stores, mixed use, historic buildings, and a pedestrian friendly environment. It offers a nostalgic construction of early 20th century American small-town life where Main Street is the social center of the community. It is a symbol of an ideal American urban community, a place where people work together to solve problems and a reminder of an era in which the economy was controlled locally (Philips 2002). However, it is also the space most dedicated to consumption in its idealized construction of a turn-of-the-century American street (ibid.). Using Main Street for neighborhood commercial revitalization may reflect what Knox (2005) suggested in the slow city movement: that sense of place (place making) has become a valuable commodity in the era of globalization. These Main Streets not only have symbolic meaning to the community but also carry utilitarian value in the local heritage industry and real estate market.
The New Role of Neighborhood Commercial Districts

In addition to retail development, neighborhood commercial districts present economic development opportunities as part of the leisure-tourism infrastructure and as quality of life amenities for real estate development in the process of urban revitalization and redevelopment. Their vitality and unique characteristics are extra-economic conditions (Jessop 2002a) that improve their overall competitiveness and attract visitors and investors. The reliance on tourism as the engine for economic growth has increased dramatically during the past two decades as the function of cities has changed and the economic benefits of tourism have been recognized. This is particularly true in many industrial cities, where tourism related tactics, such as convention halls, stadiums, waterfront parks and festival markets have created similar redevelopment landscapes across cities. The result is what Judd and Fainstein (1999) describe as a “converted tourist city.” Public investment in this “infrastructure of play” (Judd 2003) is usually justified not only for its economic development potential but also for the quality-of-life benefits it claims to create by converting polluted industrial cities into clean, livable, human environments. Usually motivated by the idea that tourism is an industry without smokestacks, cities have poured their energy into building a tourism/entertainment infrastructure. The place-marketing and place promotion practice of tourism development is often shared and supported by urban boosters, such as business elites, who are interested in positively portraying cities (Short 1999).
There is often community support for such development. In addition to creating an improved quality of life, tourism-leisure development can potentially result in gains for community economic development since every community has some culture to sell (Zukin 1995). At the same time, the demand for leisure and consumption spaces in the cities is driven by the increasing size of the middle-class service class in contemporary society. Individuals in this class have more cultural strength than economic capital and they provide much of the audience for cultural consumption. Cities, where culture is produced and consumed, have generated a new form of cultural, symbolic economy that reflects the political-economic and social-cultural changes in the consumption and redevelopment of cities (ibid.).

The cultural transformation from modernism to postmodernism creates the possibility of culture-leisure consumption at the neighborhood level. Flexible accumulation has been accompanied on the consumption side by a much greater attention to quick-changing fashions and the cultural transformation that this implies. As Harvey (1989) suggests, “the relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism has given way to all ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of postmodernist aesthetic that celebrate difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion and the commodification of cultural forms.” (ibid., 75) The flexibility of the Post-Fordism mode of accumulation enables the differentiation of formerly standardized markets. In this context, one can valorize multiculturalism and diversity, giving rise to new forms of cultural capital that create interest in
formerly unattractive places (Hoffman 2003) such as ethnic enclaves and neighborhood commercial districts.

Neighborhood commercial districts play a key role in this particular development of cultural consumption at the local level. As the main public space of the neighborhood, the neighborhood commercial district is where culture is most likely to be seen and consumed (Zukin 2004; Deener 2007; Zukin et al. 2009). In a gentrified neighborhood, specialty stores, restaurants and other creative consumption businesses create “public characters of gentrification” (Patch 2008) and make the area safe and fun for residents and visitors who seek distinct cultural experiences. In ethnic neighborhoods, the unfamiliar stores and merchandise generate “exotic” atmospheres that are unique to the urban experience. Therefore, neighborhood businesses represent the character of the neighborhood and, at the same time create a sense of place that is important for cultural consumption. Engaging local neighborhoods in economic development, either in the form of community tourism or neighborhood commercial revitalization presents a new opportunity for economic development from the bottom up. Unlike large-scale flagship projects that tend to focus on downtowns and whose financial benefits are mostly corporate, local neighborhood commercial district economic development provides an opportunity for the economic benefits of tourism to trickle down to the neighborhood level.

Neighborhood commercial districts also serve another important function in attracting potential residents, especially those of middle-upper classes. The force of globalization and the development of a new technological, knowledge-
based economy have generated a new type of intellectual class in society (Castells 1996). This class is concerned with lifestyle and consumption as important bases for stratification (Jessop 2002a). The idea of sense of place, often featured with European-style street life in walkable neighborhoods, has become a valuable commodity in the era of globalization (Knox 2005). Neighborhood commercial spaces are not only used to attract occasional out-of-town tourists but also those who seek this particular type of lifestyle. As Smith (2002) suggests, these shopping amenities are as important as housing to attracting the middle class back to the city. As the most important public space and consumption space of the neighborhood, neighborhood shopping districts carry symbols and characters of the neighborhood that attract particular lifestyle seekers (Deener 2007). As a result, neighborhood commercial districts have important utilitarian value in the real estate development of cities.

Evaluation Framework:

Neoliberalism, Gentrification and Uneven Development

The rise of post-modernism, the symbolic economy, and specific aspects of U.S. history prepared the way for the popularity of historic preservation as an urban revitalization strategy. A revival of a liberal approach to public policy, called the neoliberal approach to urban governance, on the other hand, established Main Street as a popular policy for commercial revitalization. In particular, the “Organization” idea in the Four-Points Approach where
“partnership” is emphasized is where the Main Street model echoes the changing regulatory landscape of cities.

**Neoliberalism, Urban Governance and the New Social Relationship**

Literature on neoliberalism provides a theoretical framework for seeing a new social relationship emerging among the state, the market, and civil society within the context of globalization and urban restructuring. In the context of globalization, the declining profitability of mass-production, and the crisis of Keynesian welfare policies, local states throughout the older industrialized world began to experience “the innovation of a set of national state policies favoring privatization and unfettered free market capitalism as ideal mechanisms for regulating social, political, and economic life” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350). The goal was to downsize the state apparatus and create greater institutional and economic efficiency. This goal is achieved through devolution of state responsibilities to local governments or to the private and not-for-profit sectors and an emphasis on institutional and individual competition and entrepreneurialism. The shift to neoliberal market-oriented policies promotes new cultural polities. Terms such as growth, efficiency, competitiveness, entrepreneur, place promotion, urban makeover, or individualism have emerged as popular political rhetoric and have replaced the key ideas in the Keynesian welfare policies, such as social redistribution, social development, or public investment (ibid.).
In the framework of neoliberalism, the role of government has evolved from a regulator for welfare distribution and service provision into an entrepreneur for economic promotion and competitive restructuring. Neoliberalism informs new relationships among the state, the market and civic society. In this context, public-private partnership has become the new discourse for economic development and urban politics. Some scholars would argue privatism (Squires 1991) or the concept of growth coalition (Logan and Molotch 1987) has historically been rooted in the politics of urban development, yet it is undoubted that public-private partnerships have been revived and are viewed as the critical tool for economic development today. According to Squires (1991), the concept of public-private partnerships is based on the ideology of privatism in which the private sector and the market are key for nurturing development. The principal role for the public sector in these partnerships is based on the neoliberal agenda: to facilitate private capital accumulation via the free market. Forms of public-partnerships vary from those that involve public agencies providing direct subsidies to private firms; to those that involve partnerships between businesses, public officials, and community groups; to formal organizations of leading businesses and public officials. The role of the government is governance to promote collaboration between stakeholders to increase competitiveness (Jessop 2002a). Both private and nonprofit sectors become “partners” to the state in collaborative governance.

Under the neoliberal agenda, revival of the “local” has become a strategically important arena in which political-economic elites are “aggressively
attempting to promote economic regeneration from below” (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Fyfe 2005, 536). Community development, in this context, becomes an important strategy to make a city competitive beyond the downtown area. In addition to taking responsibility for welfare service delivery, community nonprofits and voluntary organizations have also provided the arenas for practicing citizenship and engaging in the process of local economic development. These developments have created an increasingly important and high profile role for voluntary-sector organizations like Main Street organizations. To start, they represent opportunities for civic engagement and democratic participation. Additionally, they encourage local voluntary activities and create a cooperative atmosphere that can improve the urban economic competitiveness.

Neoliberalization of Urban Space and Uneven Development

If neoliberalism represents the policy response to global structural changes, cities are the sites where the process of globalization occurs and transforms communities at the local level. In their article on the geography of “actually existing neoliberalism,” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350) highlight the key implications of how planning and local politics are transformed in response to these changes. Economic development is the new focus of urban planning. Strategic planning for specific target areas is the new “spatial-temporal fix” (Jessop 2002) to the deterioration of post-industrial cities. This strategy has replaced the traditional comprehensive approach to assessing the overall interests of cities. It often involves placing a primary focus on project-based
initiatives and deal making over regulatory plans and procedures (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002). The primary work of planners in economic development is selling rather than traditional planning (Levy 1990). Their work usually serves as self-promoting advertising for the economic development agency and director. These deal-making projects incorporate much less public space for civic engagement, replacing this with private space for consumption and play instead. Economic development is seen as a remedy for social problems such as poverty. Public investment is focused on meeting the needs of tourists, investors and developers, in the name of taxes revenue and jobs creation (Eisinger 2000).

In terms of local politics and geography of power, increasingly we see a society separated not by government and people but by their ability to participate in the new growth schemes of cities focused on economic development. Participation in this context is limited to elite fractions of civic society and driven by professionalism rather than civic engagement. Therefore we see a dual society of elites that are able to participate in new growth schemes and disenfranchised groups who are never permitted to become part of the new growth coalition. The role of the community organization has become defined by [economic] development rather than political action. As a result, issues such as gentrification and poverty are localized and the potential for power for social movement is fragmented with unorganized local actions (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350).

Uneven development is seen not only between downtown areas and the rest of cities but also among different neighborhoods depending on their social-
economic resources and ability to participate in the new growth coalition. The idea of “partnering” with local community organizations at first appears to create opportunities for decision making from the bottom up. However, relying on local voluntary organization for economic development creates the potential threat that the current spatial inequality of resources and development will be intensified. Fyfe and Milligan (2003) argue that the uneven local geographies of voluntary activity are clearly important because they suggest that voluntarism may reinforce rather than alleviate social and spatial inequalities. Poor neighborhoods are less likely to have social and economic resources that support a self-help approach to revitalization than moderate or higher-income neighborhoods. Another criticism of the rise of voluntary organizations in the neoliberal agenda is related to the representation of these organizations. In her study on the neighborhood revitalization initiative in Minneapolis, Elwood (2002) points out neighborhood grassroots organizations may become engaged in reproducing neoliberal priorities and policies at a highly localized level by way of the new roles they are assuming in urban governance. Instead of representing the interest of the neighborhood, they turn themselves into the “shadow state” (Wolch 1990) and become the vehicle to deliver the city’s agenda at the community level. From the public policy perspective, Adam and Hess (2001) argue that the rise of community organizations involved a selective theoretical convergence between neo-liberalism and communitarianism. The rhetoric about community organization is simply fad rather than a new foundation when policy makers are saying about community.
Historic Preservation and Gentrification

Most arguments against preservation-based revitalization are based on the issue of social equity and cultural representation. It is believed that using historic preservation as a catalyst for community development will attract new investment but ultimately result in gentrification. Smith, in particular, argued that historic preservation is “the frontier for gentrification” (1986). Within the larger cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment that marks gentrification, historic preservation provides a means by which disinvested properties and neighborhoods can be made economically attractive for new infusions of capital (Smith 1998, 481). The ideology of assisting low-income residents and attracting capital from middle-upper income residents to create a mixed-income neighborhood is noble; however, it is difficult to implement comprehensively within the current social-economic context. In addition, the geographic concentration of historically-designated properties often overlaps with the concentration of low-income and poverty groups that need affordable housing. In addition, Sohmer and Lang (1998) argue that traditional definitions of historically-significant sites are biased in favor of middle-class culture: the ethos that obsesses over authenticity. These authenticities sometimes clash with the community’s demand for affordable development due to the extra burden of complying with historical standards. Another argument suggests that historic preservation favors specialty retailing, such as antique shops and boutique stores, which in turn limits job opportunities for local, lower-income residents (ibid., 426)
In her book *The Cultures of Cities*, Zukin discusses the social and cultural meanings of the neighborhood commercial district. She suggests that “neighborhood shopping streets, especially when they are connected with ethnicity, social class and gender are sites where the identities are formed” (Zukin 1995, 191). These shopping spaces are important to city residents for constructing identity and difference. While downtown represents the landscape of power, neighborhood shopping streets, on the other hand, remain the landscape of the vernacular (ibid., 255). They are sites for the domestic part of urban life, which are important to women, children, the elderly, and immigrants who have less mobility beyond their neighborhoods. At the same time, these neighborhood commercial districts are also neighborhood public spaces. They are sites for “social contestations where citizens of diverse interest and backgrounds negotiate their daily political, economic and social interactions” (Schaller and Modan 2005, 396). In the meantime, they are democratic spaces of interaction where social networks are created and maintained, where citizens can confront one another and engage in conflict directly.

However, as neighborhood commercial districts become integrated as part of a local economic development strategy, they no longer simply serve the local population with neighborhood-based amenities and services. They are reformed as special districts for visitors and frontiers for gentrification or redevelopment to make the city more competitive. Strategies like the Main Street Approach could become mechanisms to package, market, sell, and ultimately “restructure urban space as a cultural commodity” (Zukin 1995; Mitchell 2003; Schaller and Modan
As of today, neighborhood commercial districts are increasingly becoming private space for consumers rather than public space for citizens. As real estate development becomes a centerpiece of the city’s productive economy (Smith 2002), amenities like walkable shopping districts are potential frontiers to open up neighborhood for gentrification. As Smith suggests:

Retaking the city for the middle classes involves a lot more than simply providing gentrified housing. Third-wave gentrification has evolved into a vehicle for transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes that pioneer a comprehensive class-infected urban remark. These new landscape complexes now integrate housing with shopping, restaurants, cultural facilities (cf Vine 2001), open space, employment opportunities-whole new complexes of recreation, consumption, production and pleasure, as well as residence. (Smith 2002, 443)

As compared to the early phase of gentrification when activities are organic and spatially concentrated around urban centers, the geography of the new gentrification has diffused outward from the cores and could be influenced by anything—the presence of high-quality architecture, parks, water or shopping amenities (ibid.). Additionally, what marks the latest phase of gentrification is that “a new amalgam of corporate and state powers and practices has been forged in a much more ambitious effort to gentrify the city” (ibid., 443). Besides the full weight of private-market finance available for inner city real estate development, what is more important, as Smith describes, is the role of the local state in institutionalizing gentrification as an urban growth strategy. The renewed focus on neighborhood commercial revitalization in cities is an effort to create additional sites beyond downtowns for leisure and consumption for visitors and potential middle-upper class residents who seek a particular lifestyle. Thus, in
this context, neighborhood commercial district revitalization could become a strategy for gentrification.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The popularity of the Main Street program in cities is built upon the awakened attention to neighborhood commercial districts. Its unique formula, which blends historic preservation (design), community organization (organization), city-wide promotion (promotion) and the focus of economic development (economic restructuring), makes the program distinct from its predecessors. Yet the popularity of the Main Street Approach in the urban context is also embedded in the changing political, economic and cultural environment, both globally and locally. It uses community development and historic preservation as positive strategies for creating a “sense of place” through social cohesiveness (voluntary participation and civic engagement) and physical cohesiveness (history and architectural characteristics), and makes this place more desirable than others to promote growth at the very local level. The Main Street Approach takes advantage of changing economic structures emphasizing niche marketing rather than mass production and the demand for cultural consumption in the form of leisure and tourism development. It is also rooted in the specific political environment of the United States that uses preservation as a development strategy and a new cultural policy for growth. The Main Street model represents a hybrid of theories and practices that links global and local
forces. At the same time, the popularity of Main Street as an easily replicated model for neighborhood commercial revitalization reflects the changing neoliberal regulatory landscape where efficiency is the key requirement for urban policies. Main Street’s areas of emphasis also replicate the rhetoric of new cultural politics that promote partnership, self help, place promotion and economic development. As a result, Main Street’s impact will reflect neoliberalism, where uneven development is the key spatial implication. The Main Street Approach to commercial revitalization presents as place promotion tool for leisure and real estate development for cities rather than a place making tool for its inhabitants.

Here I would like to present my first research hypothesis, which addresses why the Main Street Approach has become increasingly popular in large cities for neighborhood commercial revitalization:

Hypothesis I: The Main Street Four Point Approach has become popular to local governments because it fits into the structural-cultural changes of cities, the new neoliberal regulatory landscape, and the popular political rhetoric of inclusion, efficiency, and competitiveness. However, the implementation of the Main Street program reproduces neoliberal priorities and limits its opportunities for community rebuilding.

The second research question concerns the implementation of Main Streets and how they vary by neighborhood socio-economic context. My second hypothesis is built upon the implications of neoliberalism on uneven spatial development.

Hypothesis II: Heavily reliant on volunteer resources, Main Street implementation replicates the feature of uneven development of the neoliberal policy, where poor or socially disfranchised neighborhoods have less power to fully implement the program.
My final research question is concerned with the effects of Main Street program commercial revitalization on neighborhoods at large. Here I present my third hypothesis:

Hypothesis III: Local governments’ renewed attention to neighborhood commercial revitalization in cities is not only for neighborhood service provision, but also to create sites for leisure and consumption for visitors and potential middle-upper class residents. The Main Street program, with a focus on visual strategies (historic preservation and promotion) and changes (economic restructuring), reflects this trend.

Methods—Case Study Research with a Mixed-Method Approach

To understand the process of neighborhood commercial revitalization and the adaptation of one of the most popular strategies, the “Main Street Approach,” this paper uses case study research (Yin 2003) examine neighborhood commercial revitalization efforts in Baltimore, Maryland. As urban neighborhoods are unique in their own political, social, economic and physical environment, case studies will help to develop “context-oriented” empirical data on the nature of particular “urban conditions” (Andranovich & Riposa 1993; Gross 2005). I looked at eleven neighborhoods involved in the popular city-wide program called “Baltimore Main Streets” that was initiated in 2000. These case studies will provide a descriptive perspective on how neighborhood Main Street organizations function in specific urban contexts and their impacts on commercial revitalization and beyond. Within this case study on Baltimore, I adopt a mixed-method approach to understand the process of implementation and impact of the program in neighborhood in various social—economic contexts.
Baltimore’s city-wide Main Street program is the second largest urban program in the country, right after Boston in terms of the program size and length of operation. Despite not being the largest and oldest urban Main Street program, Baltimore Main Streets is the urban Main Street program that has received much attention from practitioners. Its different organization structure, which is embedded under a quasi-governmental redevelopment agency, enables it to use the power of eminent domain for property acquisition (Baltimore Main Streets 2009). Additionally, city-wide holiday promotion and marketing efforts coupled with the fact that it was the first urban site to house the National Main Street Conference have drawn a great deal of publicity. As a result of its entrepreneurial and “innovative” approach to program implementation, Baltimore Main Streets has become the model of a successful urban Main Street program.

In addition to its different approach to program implementation, Baltimore Main Streets was also attractive to me because of the city in which it is located. From a planning perspective, Baltimore City represents a relevant case study city with a strong emphasis on physical improvements in its redevelopment policy. The physical transformation of Inner Harbor has generated an enormous amount of economic development activity and has transformed the city’s image. The festival mall “Harbor Place,” a retail-oriented project, is one of the most internationally renowned downtown waterfront redevelopment projects and has marked a new era of urban transformation, in which development shifts away from manufacturing and offices to tourist-consumption oriented development.
However, the downtown’s economic success has been criticized as an island in a sea of poverty in a city that continues to lose population. Neighborhood commercial revitalization is one of the city’s more recent attempts to address revitalization beyond the urban core. My research seeks to look at how this particular program has helped to balance the geographic inequality in development, how the idea of a retail-oriented strategy is applied at the neighborhood level, and how this strategy relates to the process of gentrification and neighborhood change.

The adoption of a mixed-method approach emerged from the nature of my research question, as well as from concerns about the existing studies on Main Streets. My research questions on why Main Street is popular and how it is implemented in various neighborhood context primary deal with “the process” – why the program is adopted in the urban context and how different neighborhoods implement the Four-Point Approach. Qualitative methods such as interviews and documents analysis have the strength to capture the thick descriptions (Rubin and Rubin 1995) about program adoption and implementation. On the other hand, the quantitative approach was initially adopted mainly to answer the third question, about the “impact” of the program. As mentioned above, the method that the National Trust and many other economic impact studies on Main Street use is to simply add or subtract jobs and establishments before and after the program’s existence, without taking macro-economic trends into account. In addition, situating these Main Street areas in their neighboring socio-economic contexts is important to understand their
capacities to achieve full program implementation. Therefore, systematically comparing areas with and without the program at the city-wide level while analyzing the local differences becomes the essential elements I incorporate into my research design. Quantitative data, such as decennial census records, have the advantage of providing a quick overview of neighborhood variations at a city-wide level. At the same time, site observations were taken simultaneously to triangulate the findings from the quantitative data and quantitative data. To some extent, data and analyses from qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other and allow one to understand the physical, social and economic context of neighborhood variations through different perspectives at different scales. They become the foundation to later establish the typology of Main Street neighborhoods for further analysis.

The project was piloted in 2004 as an isolated paper in my graduate school work. In this pilot project, a basic understanding of the program was achieved through four in-depth interviews with neighborhood Main Street managers and by direct participation in several neighborhood meetings and volunteer training sessions. In terms of formal interviews, I gained access to the informants as a former resident and volunteer in one of the Main Street neighborhoods in Baltimore. After 2004, the project was set aside until 2009, when observations and interviews were resumed for a one-year period ending in 2010. In the end, the primary data were compiled from a total of sixteen semi-structured interviews. This includes four interviews with commercial revitalization officials, eleven interviews with neighborhood Main Street managers, and one interview
with a neighborhood resident. The selection of the interviewees was primarily based on their affiliation with the program, though the interview with the resident was referred by a neighborhood Main Street manager to provide the perspective of residents. For the purpose of confidentiality, the names of the interviewees are withheld in writing. Secondary data sources, including census data, business directories, official reports, and other printed and online media accounts (e.g., newspapers, neighborhood websites, YouTube videos and social networking sites such as Facebook and blogs) have been incorporated into the research to support an extended case analysis of the Baltimore Main Streets program.

The investigation of local variances in program implementation and impact does not stop in the qualitative analysis. Statistical analysis and GIS are also used to help understand the impact of the Main Street Approach on commercial revitalization in a quantitative way. In particular, I adopt the measurements of building sale volume, scale of building rehabilitation and property appreciation to measure the extent to which program adoption has opened up the neighborhood to real estate development. The selection of these measurements was based upon the research question laid out earlier as well as the practicality of data availability and sensitivity at this particular scale of analysis. For the first two measurements, the difference-in-difference approach is used to compare the annual statistics by neighborhood. Interpretation of the third measurement, property appreciation rate, is based on a hedonic regression model that seeks to capture the marginal effect of Main Street designation on property appreciation rate.
To highlight spatial relationships and local differences at a city-wide level, I also use Geographic Information System (GIS) for mapping and data integration in this research. First, I use thematic mapping to visualize the social-demographic as well as economic difference of these neighborhoods. Thematic mapping of data such as housing vacancy rate and other socio-demographic attributes at a city-wide scale allow one to examine the general patterns while preserving local variations. GIS is also used for data preparation and integration that helps refine measurements in property value modeling (Chen 1994). Tools in network analysis, such as an origin-destination cost matrix, are used to construct the distance measurements used in the regression model. At the same time, I also use GIS model builder and STATA do files for extensive documentation of data preparation and analysis.

From a policy perspective, Baltimore City is also known as a city of enterprise (Hall 1988), a classical example of neoliberal governance where the idea of competitiveness, efficiency and strategic management are central to political discourse. I take a grounded approach to understand how neighborhood commercial revitalization efforts are situated within this particular political-economic context by focusing on the Baltimore Main Streets program. At the same time, I inquire about the larger relationship between neighborhood commerce, the neoliberal approach to neighborhood revitalization and larger global-cultural changes that redefine the role of urban neighborhoods. By examining the implementation of the program at a city-wide level and taking a close look at the larger structural changes that frame the discourse on
neighborhood commercial revitalization, I hope the propositions developed in this research trigger interest in developing comparative works in other locales to further examine the impact of this particular approach to commercial revitalization and neighborhood change.
Chapter 3

Baltimore Main Streets and Neoliberalization of Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization

In this chapter I focus on the case study of the Baltimore Main Streets program. I begin with a brief discussion of urban Main Streets, a trend in the city-wide focus of inner-city commercial revitalization using the Main Street Four-Point Approach model. Following a description of Baltimore Main Streets and the policy evolution of neighborhood commercial revitalization in Baltimore, I highlight why Baltimore Main Streets represents a neoliberal policy on neighborhood commercial revitalization. It offers opportunities for grassroots participation and incorporates small businesses development in the local economic development agenda, but I argue its program structure potentially undermines its ability to achieve this goal at a city-wide level.

Urban Main Streets as a Popular Solution to Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization

The call for downtown commercial revitalization is not new, but there is increasing attention on revitalizing neighborhood commercial district cores as the focus of community development. During the 1990s, revitalizing
neighborhood business districts emerged as an important community development priority (Seidman 2004). Cities and community-based organizations have learned that housing development alone is not sufficient to rebuild communities and strengthen local economies. Because the Main Street program has been so successful at transforming traditional commercial districts in small downtown and rural settings, urban practitioners are turning with increasing frequency to the Main Street model as they share similar assets such as physical characteristics, active local leaders, and similar economic hardships. More than twenty cities and fifty urban neighborhoods have used the Main Street Four Point Approach to revitalize neighborhood business districts (ibid.).

The practitioners interested in the Main Street model include business associations, community development corporations, neighborhood organizations, residents, and city officials. They usually apply to the state economic or community development agency, and become part of the state-wide Main Street program. The designation provides recipients free technical assistance from the National Main Street Center to implement the Four Point Approach. The funding mechanism for each local Main Street organization can be self-funded via a business improvement district or other self-assessment district model, or established via grants from community development intermediaries, such as Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (Rick and Hickey 2006). But there is an increasingly popular approach, which is the initiation of citywide Main Street programs, where major funding is provided by the city government. Boston, Massachusetts was the first city to
adopt the Main Street Four Point Approach as a citywide initiative to revitalize urban neighborhood commercial corridors in 1990. Following successes in Baltimore and Washington DC, many cities have not only expressed their interest in this holistic approach of commercial revitalization, but also institutionalized Main Street program as one of the long term strategies for community development (Figure 1).

![Types of urban Main Street funding sources](source: Karl F Seidman, 2004. Revitalizing commerce for American cities: FannieMac Foundation)

Figure 1. Types of urban Main Street funding sources

Baltimore Main Streets

Baltimore Main Streets, formally introduced by Mayor Martin O’Malley in 2000, was the second citywide urban Main Street program in the nation. The creation of the program was a combination of state and city interests, but it began
due to a demand from the grassroots. According to a former Baltimore Main Streets official, several Baltimore neighborhoods had already filed their applications to Maryland’s Main Street Program before the citywide program was created. As the number of urban neighborhood applications increased, the state recognized the need to create an independent urban Main Street program to reduce competition among urban neighborhoods and small towns. Using a combination of city general funds, Urban Development Action Grants, and community bonds, the city put together 1.6 millions dollar for the first four years of program operation. This does not include other federal, state and grant funding for capital improvement projects. By 2004, about $2.83 million spent in projects like street beautification and façade improvements (Baltimore Main Streets 2004b). The program was first housed under the Division of Commercial Revitalization in the Department of Community Development and Housing. In 2002, the entire division was moved to Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), a 501(c)(3) corporation contracted with the City of Baltimore to provide economic development services.

The selection of Baltimore Main Streets neighborhoods was through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. In 2000, seven pilot neighborhoods were chosen based on their physical characteristics, commitment, organizational capacities, and community support. Having significant historic buildings is considered a plus, but is not a requirement for application. What comes with the designation includes: technical assistance from the National Main Street Center; an overall citywide coordinator and funding for one full-time Main Street
manager. Additional grants for façade improvement and promotion are also included in the package (ibid.) (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar Year</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Grants</td>
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<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Façade Improvement Program</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
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<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL - 1 new program**  
$107,000 | $82,000 | $77,000 | $60,000 | $25,000

**Five year total = $351,000**

Source: Baltimore Main Streets 2004c.

However, the grants that the city provides are devolving throughout the first five years. The notion is to use public funding as seed money for the Main Street organizations to grow and build their capacity for fund raising to become financially independent. The contract with the National Main Street Center provides training, manager training and meetings, technical visits, year-end evaluations, and membership in the center. Three additional neighborhoods were added to the program, one in 2004 and two in 2008. As of year 2011, there are ten Main Street neighborhoods housed under the Baltimore Main Streets under the division of commercial revitalization in Baltimore Development Corporation.

The ten Main Street neighborhoods include six pilot neighborhoods: Belair Edison, East Monument Street, Federal Hill, Hampden, Pennsylvania Avenue,
Washington Village/Pigtown; followed by Highlandtown (designated in 2004) and Fell’s Point (designated in 2006), Hamilton-Laurelville and Brooklyn as the last two members, added in 2008. Hampden is one of the pilot Main Street neighborhoods designated in 2000 but become inactive in 2005 (Figure 2). While the Baltimore Main Streets program works as a coordinator for neighborhood Main Streets, an individual Main Street organization can be an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit entity, or it can be a sub-committee under the current community organization. Every Main Street organization works directly with Baltimore Main Streets, but those working under the other entities have a fiduciary duty to their umbrella organizations (Appendix I). The structure of individual Main Street organizations can be slightly different from one another, but they all basically reflect the Main Street Four-Point Approach: having four subcommittees in design, promotion, economic restructuring and fundraising/volunteer recruitment (Appendix II). The manager is the only full-time employee. The rest of the members are volunteer-based, composed of residents, merchants, property owners or other interest groups. Usually board members are those who initiate the application for the Main Street program.

While individual Main Street organizations have focused on and accomplished tasks that vary from one another, their primary activities are façade and streetscape improvements, as well as property and business development.

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2 East Monument Street, Pennsylvania Avenue and Washington Village/Pigtown were initially funded by the grants through Empowerment Zone.

3 Usually the community representative will sit on the board of their main street sub-committee.
According to the first Baltimore Main Streets program review report released in 2004, the program had funded 291 façade improvement projects that leveraged about $1.7 million in private funds, or about three times more than the public
investment after four years of program implementation. As of 2004, $2.8 million in public improvement projects had been completed, with an additional $3.9 million in the planning stage. In terms of business development, 201 net new businesses had opened, creating 484 new full-time jobs and 261 new part-time jobs. Since October 2000, $33 million of private investment had been put into these original seven Main Street districts. Another measure included in the report is that, in total, around 30,000 volunteer hours had been recruited through Main Street activities (Baltimore Main Streets 2004b).

Another primary activity that Main Street organizations take on is promotion. Promotion related activities vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, include sales events or festivals, or developing a logo or theme to synthesize (or simplify) neighborhood characteristics. An individual neighborhood promotes itself through different themes, such as art, history, social diversity and ethnicity. For instance, Federal Hill promotes its history through its eighteenth-century, pre-automobile urban landscape and historic buildings. It is also known for nightlife, dining destinations and high-end boutiques. Hampden, on the other hand, has always been famous for its working-class neighborhood characteristics mixed with a new wave of bohemian, creative-consumption businesses. HonFest, a local event which celebrates Baltimore’s working women, has become one of the most popular local events that attracts returning crowds. Pennsylvania Avenue is labeled as the “premier African-American historic district in Baltimore,” using historical elements such as jazz,

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4 HonFest is an annual event operated by Café Hon, a local destination restaurant in Hampden. It is not a Main Street promotion activity.
the Underground Railroad, and a traditional market to promote African-American heritage (Baltimore Development Corporation 2004). Although not all of the Main Street organizations can figure out a way to simplify or synthesize their neighborhoods, they all use some common language: pedestrian friendly walkway, family-oriented, mixed-use, a place to live, work, shop and play, mom and pop stores, and sense of community etc. They all try to emphasize their strategic locations: nearby institutions or destinations, a large employment center, and accessibility to highways and downtown. While they promote nostalgic feelings for locally-owned, mom-and-pop stores, they also use the emergence of new destination business such as restaurants, as a way of showing signs of revitalization. A promotional slogan “Main Streets: Where Baltimore Happens” and banner (Figure 3) was designed by a public relation firm in 2009.

Figure 3: A street banner with the new slogan "Main Street: Where Baltimore Happens".
to give all the Main Street neighborhoods a collective brand (Baltimore Main Streets 2011). These messages, combining authenticity and signs of revitalization, are designed to help re-imagine and attract investments to these traditional neighborhood commercial corridors.

Evolution of Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization in Baltimore

Adopting the Main Street program is not the city’s first attempt concerning neighborhood commercial revitalization. As neighborhood commercial districts declined during the era of suburbanization and out-migration, several efforts were made to improve the conditions of these neighborhood business districts in Baltimore. Through reviews of reports and documents concerning commercial district revitalization, this study suggests that the policy evolution of neighborhood commercial revitalization reflects those of neoliberalism, where planning has shifted from comprehensive to strategic and the responsibility has been down shifted from federal and local state to individual communities. At the same time, the local state acts as an entrepreneur and takes partnership with local participants. The attention to its role on “economic development” is increasingly emphasized, as compared to community development or neighborhood service provision.

Studies of neighborhood commercial districts or retail began to emerge in 1950s, as the result of decline from the suburbanization of population as well as retail businesses. Several reports addressed overall urban retail as one of the
economic sectors that has been damaged by the outmigration. Studies during this era were mostly initiated by the Department of Planning, and all the neighborhood business districts were examined collectively, as urban retail was perceived to be a city-wide planning issue (Alt 1951; Baltimore City Department of Planning 1958; Hollander 1958). In a research report by John’s Hopkins University, titled “Market areas of retail shopping centers in Baltimore City” (Alt 1951), the author took an economic and marketing approach to tackle the conditions of neighborhood commercial districts. By looking at patterns, problems, and potentials of neighborhood commercial districts, he identified the challenges and opportunities including both downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. During this era, the revival of the neighborhood commercial districts was considered to be a city-wide planning issue and the understanding of the future of urban retail markets was the key to a solution.

The 1960s were marked as an era of solutions, with modernization and renewal dominating the discourse for change. A 1965 report called “Study on eighteen older community shopping districts” (Hollander 1965) was conducted by a marketing firm and funded by the Community Renewal Program under Federal Urban Renewal Administration.5 The data in the report were used by a federally-supported demonstration program, which was administered by the Mayor’s Advisory Committee for Small Business, in order to renew these older shopping districts. The renewal components ranged from small-scale public works like street lighting, paving improvements, and adding off-street parking

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5 The local community renewal program was conducted by Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency and the Department of Planning.
space, to large scale demolition for new use. Although the problems of neighborhood commercial districts were extremely complex, the solutions to it were purely physical, with the hope that physical changes would create a more attractive and safer place to encourage the return of shoppers. For example, the redesign of Old Town shopping center in the northwestern corner of the downtown took the approach of a pedestrian mall model, a common renewal practice for commercial revitalization in cities throughout the United States. By closing the street to vehicle traffic and providing off-street parking, this design approach intended to mimic the environment of suburban shopping centers (Levatino 1978). Other elements, such as offices, auto-oriented business, or housing developments from urban renewal programs, had been introduced as new design elements in the proposals for neighborhood commercial districts after vacancies increased and the districts continued to deteriorate (The Baltimore Sun 1960; Lukas 1960; Williams 1955, 1954). However, because there was little federal funding and political attention on neighborhood shopping areas, the renewal projects mostly stayed at the proposal stage (Levatino 1978).

In the 70s and 80s, the attention on the renewal of the city focused on two disparate spatial categories: downtowns and neighborhoods. As the results, there was almost no city-wide attention on neighborhood commercial districts during this era. In the downtown, the focus was about redevelopment of office projects and the waterfront. For neighborhoods, it focused on housing rehabilitation and community development. Neighborhood commercial districts became the gray areas between the two, often simply being categorized as community economic
development or ghetto economic development (Blair and Reese 1999). Under the big umbrella subject of community development, housing or social services often took precedence over the revitalization of neighborhood shopping districts. Even if the effort was made, the approach to the retail problem was neighborhood-oriented, by examining the gaps between the needs of local shoppers and the services provided in the neighborhood, rather a holistic city-wide planning analysis of traditional shopping areas (Neighborhood Progress Administration 1987).

The 1990s saw a renewed interest towards neighborhood commercial districts, both from the policy side as well as from the market side. Old neighborhood shopping areas began to receive attention again from the state and city level, in the form of business assistance. Neighborhood Business Development Programs, as part of the Smart Growth efforts in Maryland, have provided financial assistance, through low interest loans, to help businesses open or expand in the poor inner city neighborhoods (Tasker 1995). The “Business Assistance Group” was another strategy provided by the city which provided assistances to small businesses, hoping to turn sixty city’s business district around from deterioration (Mirabella 1997). Retail District Business Licensing (RDBL) was the other strategy for commercial revitalization in Baltimore in this era. Similar to business improvement districts model in other cities, RDBL are special taxing districts established in downtown and several neighborhood business districts to levy funding for service delivery such as street cleaning and joint advertising that are targeted for the need of businesses. Merchants in
neighborhoods such as Federal Hill and eight other shopping districts adopt this strategy for extra services that are not provided by the city (Thompson 1997; Buote 1998). Despite more strategies having been made available for commercial revitalization, this marked a sea change of shifting responsibility on commercial revitalization from the state to individual business. The idea of “self help” dominated the policy discourse, whether is individual business or business group collectively. The state simply provides the incentives and regulatory environment for it.

While housing rehabilitation efforts helped to stabilize the residential neighborhoods in some pockets of the City, new commercial activities also emerged, especially in gentrified neighborhoods. These new commercial activities, such as restaurants and boutiques, offered retail services that were not available elsewhere and created a regional market and destination for shoppers and visitors who seek "chic" or "unique" urban experiences (Clay 1979, 64). In the beginning of the 90s, Federal Hill, the gentrified neighborhood near Downtown Inner Harbor, was known as “the place” for small businesses (Thompson 1997). Also around the same time, another downtown neighborhood called Fell’s Point experienced a wave of gentrification from bohemians, college and young professionals. Services such as taverns, restaurants, antique stores, and art galleries created a mixed-use environment that further created a synergy for neighborhood revitalization for both residents and businesses (Smith 2007). The gentrified residential areas have created a market for new businesses to serve those gentrifiers, and these new storefronts give a fresh look to the previously
declining neighborhood commercial centers. Ironically, while Rouse’s festival market in Inner Harbor marked a return of retail market to the cities and successfully attracted suburbanites to urban markets, such styles of chain-development have also been criticized as "suburbanizing the downtown" (Isenberg 2004, 271). In contrast to the corporate experience of downtown, neighborhood commercial landscapes in gentrified neighborhoods seek to provide an ambiance that is considered “authentic” to urban experiences. These places have begun to appear on the tourism map as destinations for visitors who look for cultural distinctiveness and local shopping experiences (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Brochures that market neighborhoods as shopping destination, displayed in the visitor center in downtown Baltimore.
With the growing market of small business and place-oriented consumption style emerging, the Baltimore Main Streets program was created as an initiative for neighborhood commercial revitalization in the year 2000. It followed the footsteps of Boston, where the first ever Urban Main Street program had been implemented in the early 1990s. Baltimore Main Streets appeared to mark the return of city-wide attention to the neighborhood traditional shopping area. And this time, this commercial revitalization program seemed to generate more attention and enthusiasm, not only for the financial and technical assistances attached. During the program announcement, Mayor O’Malley made an analogy, relating the importance of neighborhood commercial district revitalization to the neighborhoods as symbolic as the Inner Harbor's transformation was to the downtown revitalization. As described in a newspaper article:

O’Malley, who announced the program with city Housing Commissioner Patricia Payne, said strong commercial districts are as important to the economic health of city neighborhoods as the Inner Harbor's transformation was to the downtown renaissance. . . . “The same thing can happen in our commercial corridors,” O’Malley said during an unveiling attended by community leaders and business representatives. "We can make our Main Streets truly things of pride." (Mirabella 2000b)

Though it is a city-wide program, the program does not offer funding and technical assistance for all neighborhood business districts. Main Street designation is through a RFP process and neighborhoods are selected based on their competitiveness based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated need for technical assistance
- A progressive and cooperative neighborhood attitude
- Broad-based neighborhood support
- A physically cohesive commercial district
- Economic capacity
- Financial commitment
- Familiarity with the goals and philosophies of the Main Street program (Baltimore Main Streets 2004a)

Unlike RDBL, having money is no longer sufficient. Neighborhood applicants need to have a clear plan about their commercial districts and demonstrate their competitiveness through a whole range of social, physical, as well as financial dimensions. In addition to demonstrate the area as a declining commercial district that is in need of help, the idea of social cohesion and collaboration is the essential requirement. Neighborhood applicants, who can be merchants, residents or stakeholders who are interested in commercial revitalization, are required to exhibit a cooperative attitude and a strong will toward change. And this must be supported by a broad range of constituents of the neighborhood since they are the potential social capital in the revitalization process. Most importantly, they need to demonstrate the ability to financially sustain the future neighborhood Main Street organization, including a full-time Main Street manager and the on-going commitment to adopt the Main Street Approach to revitalization for five years at least. The City only provides the funding for physical improvements and technical assistance. The grants for administrative costs declined after the first year. A designated district must commit to raising matching funds from at least $26,000 in the first year to $93,000 in year five and afterward to sustain the program on its own (Baltimore Main Streets 2004a). As specified in the program application guideline, the Main Street program is a “self- help” program after all and the competitiveness of the candidates needs to demonstrate their ability for self help. Yet it remains a popular program despite all the required commitments. When the program was
first introduced, twenty-five neighborhood organizations attended workshops to help prepare their applications for designation but only five neighborhoods were selected in 2000 (Mirabella 2000a).

The City as Entrepreneur:

Neoliberalization of Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization

What drives the interest towards the Main Street program in cities? How is it different from other strategies? Main Street seems to offer the same ingredients as other urban renewal projects, especially in the area of physical improvements. But other tenets, such as organization and promotion, make the program fundamentally different in several ways. The key differences between Baltimore Main Streets and other predecessors in neighborhood commercial revitalization are: 1) Focus on self help and economic efficiency 2) neighborhood commercial revitalization as economic development; 3) Main Street as a brand for collective promotion. As a city-wide program that partners with communities, the local government is an entrepreneur that coordinates the commercial revitalization activities and markets these districts collectively to a broader audience.

Focus on Self help and Economic Efficiency

A focus on the neighborhood’s competitiveness in Main Street designation entails the first dimension of city’s focus on economic efficiency. As aforementioned, the designation of a Main Street neighborhood is based on a
competitive RFP process and the applicant must demonstrate their “readiness” – both socially and financially willing to produce changes in the neighborhood business area. By selecting these committed areas, it allows the city to harvest the results faster rather than to “throw money at a problem”. As the former Baltimore Main Streets director described the fundamental difference of the program to past attempts during a press conference:

It's not a grant program. . . It's not one of those programs where we're throwing a lot of money at a problem and hoping that it helps . . . This isn't about housing or social programs or anything like that. . . It's very targeted; it's about doing something for a very well-defined commercial district. (Ey 2000)

The Main Street program is a place-based strategy that allows the city to target resources in specific geographic areas. For Baltimore where most of the city is in a sea of decay with limited resources, being targeted and focused appear to be the popular political rhetoric. As resources are limited, help is being prioritized based on an area’s competitiveness rather than its social needs. Place competition is justified by the economic rationale for the program’s long term sustainability. As National Main Street Center describes the characteristics of a successful urban Main Street program:

A competition will bring the strongest neighborhoods to the first round of partner communities. While it eliminates those neighborhoods that are struggling and most in need of help, it builds the base of success and public credibility needed to help the weakest neighborhoods later.(National Main Street Center 2000)

The idea of self help also reinforces the emphasis on economic efficiency as a neoliberal policy. From a city’s perspective, Main Street is a great strategy to gain political support on economic development at very local level with little cost.
Being publicized as a grassroots, volunteer-based organization that is committed to self help financially, Main Street is publicized as a cheap and effective revitalization program for the city. Adopting the Main Street model in fact is a public-private partnership, not only between city and neighborhoods but between the city and the National Trust. The National Main Street center has implemented the Main Street model to forty-six states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (Baltimore Main Streets 2004a). By contracting services out to the National Trust, the city paid $90,000 per neighborhood for a five-year period for technical assistance and support from the National Main Street Center to institutionalize this particular approach for neighborhood commercial revitalization. In the name of best practices, designated neighborhoods simply copy the four areas of emphasis to jump start their commercial revitalization efforts. Its technical assistance and training package provided by the Trust are meant to reduce the learning curve of individual organizations. The easy replication of the model again speaks for the ideology of economic efficiency and entrepreneurship that the local state embraces.

*Main Street as a Branding Strategy*

The idea of city as enterprise, not only limited on its focus on institutional and economic efficiency, but also expanded to how cities market themselves to the investors and other audiences nationwide. Using the Main Street Approach model for neighborhood commercial revitalization is not only for economic efficiency on its easy duplication, it is also because of its name recognition. The
“Main Street Approach” has been considered as the best practice of commercial revitalization in the United States (Murphy and Cunningham 2003). With successful stories from communities nationwide as evidence, “Main Street” serves as a “seal of quality” to funders looking for a working strategy on commercial revitalization. A former neighborhood Main Street director who is experienced in community development and fundraising commented that Main Street is the designer brand in the area of commercial revitalization.

For local neighborhoods, this brand name also carries special meaning to city officials, since these Main Streets are the areas that the mayor has specifically designated for attention. In addition to funding and technical assistance provided to the Main Streets neighborhoods, other financing policies such as Façade Improvement Plan and Shop Baltimore Loan program have also chosen Main Street neighborhoods as the priority site to encourage investment (Baltimore Business Journal 2003). In discussing the benefits of Main Street designation, another neighborhood Main Street manager claimed:

[B]eing a designated Main Street carries some background to it. It means that the city is focused on this area and really wants this area to succeed. So, for us, when I am speaking with somebody through City Government or through a funder, I make sure I mention the fact that we are a Main Street. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 4, 2010)

In order for merchants and property owner to take advantage of the façade improvement grants, the city-wide program offers free architectural service for the design of new façade in Main Street neighborhoods. Even in the current economic downturn, districts designated as Main Streets still receive special
attention when compared to others. After the City received an $800,000 revitalization program grant in 2009 through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as part of the federal government’s stimulus efforts for job creation, commercial properties in several Main Street neighborhoods were selected as priority sites for façade improvements (Gunts 2009). Two entire blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue have received a facelift as a result (Baltimore Development Corporation 2007) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Facade improvements on Pennsylvania Avenue. These projects were featured on the cover pages of Baltimore Development Corporation 2007 Annual Report. African American heritage theme was used on the mural above a beauty supply store.

The “Main Street” label also constructs a branded space that carries special meaning to new businesses and investors making these neighborhood localities distinct from the rest of the city. As a neighborhood manager described:
I think Main Street is the term that holds a lot of clout. It’s an important deal and I think savvy people and savvy business owners do know about it and would want to be a part of a Main Street. That’s why I say if you are already in one, I could see it, obviously, if you’re looking to expand, you might want to expand into another Main Street. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 04, 2010)

The “Main Street” branding also helps to even out the difference among eleven neighborhoods commercial districts in the program. Despite the fact that the selection of Main Streets was made through a competitive process, in reality, not all the commercial districts stand on the same levels. Some of the distressed neighborhoods are designated due to political reasons rather than their social-economic competitiveness. According to the former Baltimore Main Streets director, neighborhoods such as Pigtown and East Monument Street would probably never have a chance for designation if they were not part of Empowerment Zones. Therefore, the conditions of Main Street neighborhoods range from the very high-end shopping districts like Federal Hill, to distressed areas battling vacancy and disrepair. Yet, though some are more prosperous than others, they are being promoted together under the name Main Street by city officials and media. Being collectively promoted and advertised under the same name has boosted the less desirable areas to a level that they could not have achieved alone.

I think it’s really advantageous for some other Main Streets that are probably not as developed as Federal Hill... Because when we get affiliated with a neighborhood like that, you know then people, I think, will look favorably on Pigtown Main Street, because they see what the Main Street program has done for that neighborhood. And you know they can see the same thing happening here in Pigtown. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 10, 2010)
The collective branding and promotion at the city and national level is another key element of the program. The city maintains a website with information regarding individual neighborhood commercial districts, and operates a city-funded annual promotion event called “Miracle on Main Streets.” As marketed in BDC’s annual report, "Baltimore continues to be the only Main Street program in the country to acquire properties for redevelopment as well as to have a program-wide holiday event." (Baltimore Development Corporation 2007)

It encourages shoppers to attend coordinated events at different Main Street neighborhoods, which helps to change the perceptions of the areas. Even though these neighborhoods are at different stages of revitalization, the collective promotion event is helpful in generating people’s interests in less prosperous areas. As a newspaper article describes it:

"The beauty of this promotional event is that it brings a collective spirit to urban commercial districts, which has otherwise gone by the wayside with the flight of retailers," Danna [the former manager of Pigtown Main Street program] says. Miracle on Main Street also invites visitors to become acquainted with neighborhoods in a way that isn’t possible "if you just drove by," he says. (Shapiro 2005)

The event encourages visitors to walk through the street rather than drive by, which is important to become comfortable with the neighborhood, feel safe, and notice the small changes in the districts. As a former Baltimore Main Streets official described, the event helps people “discover that certain neighborhoods aren’t as ‘dodgy’ as they might fear” (ibid.). It also generates a collective
atmosphere that is different from a normal business day, making these districts warm and welcoming.

Similar collective efforts can be seen by the way the program reports statistics on program improvements and successes. Rather than publish the results by individual neighborhoods, the progress in these areas are shown collectively as a program success. Even though some of the districts have accomplished less than others, the statistics demonstrate to the city officials, media, and the public regarding the overall success of the program. Indeed, being a collective program helped these neighborhood commercial districts receive attention at the national level. When the local grocery chain “Giant” expressed a desire to expand its inner city market, Main Street neighborhoods were selected as priority sites for consideration due to their affiliation with the program (Stiehm 2002). In 2005, Baltimore was selected as the first large city for the annual National Main Street Conference, which attracts practitioners of commercial revitalization nationwide; attendees toured these neighborhood commercial districts in part of the city that are otherwise relatively unknown to outsiders. Lately, the program also appeared in national media that targets business communities. A CNN Money article ranked the Baltimore metropolitan area as the tenth best place to launch a small business, with the presence of the “Main Street” program as one of the key contributing factors (Zimmerman 2009). As a Main Street neighborhood activist hoped at the beginning of designation, "we're confident that Main Streets will push things forward and get attention from the city and from national businesses." (Mirabella 2000c)
The collective branding under “Main Streets” helps to get attention at an unprecedented level for individual neighborhoods. As a result, new neighborhoods apply for Main Street designation not only for the money and technical support but “the clout that comes with the designation” (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 4, 2009). Consequently, these neighborhoods are no longer individual commercial districts; they belong to a network of branded competitive commercial space packaged by the city to sell these places to funders and investors, as well as consumers. In fact, that has been the goal of the former Mayor O’Malley whose entrepreneurship has been featured in the national media such as New York Times and Newsweek and who brought the Main Street Approach to Baltimore at the first place. In a press conference which highlighted some of his administration’s accomplishments, with the Baltimore Main Streets program included, he said his plan is to market the city nationally, “to attract national attention, recognition and funding to Baltimore” (Berk 2001). To the local neighborhood, a designation is considered “a ticket to revitalization and increased prosperity” (Harlan 2001).

As a network of local neighborhood shopping districts, Main Street could provide an opportunity to organize a city-wide coalition of small businesses. Yet such a coalition can be broken down easily, as these neighborhoods are constantly in competition with each other to find business and resources, whether it is from the funders or from the city. A Main Street official describes the relationship among Main Street neighborhoods is collaborative at the same time competitive. They don’t want to tell other about where they get the funding
and resources. They compete with each other for new businesses and customers. At the same time, they befriend to each other about the nuts and bolts of commercial revitalization in general.

As a result of budget cuts from economic recessions, the BDC has proposed to cut funding to the Main Street program, as well as graduating four of ten Main Street neighborhoods in 2011. Some think the decision will be made on a racial ground, since this would affect African Americans the most (Mirabella 2010). The BDC denied such speculation, but it is likely that the redevelopment districts would be affected the most if the decision is made based on economic competitiveness. All designated districts speak about the importance of the Main Street program, but each neighborhood is busy from the effort of getting support letters from their communities and writing letters to city officials for saving their own district, rather the impact on small businesses as a whole. As a place-based strategy with very limited resources, the ability for the Main Street program members to organize is constrained by the competition.

*Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization as Economic Development*

The organizational structure, which is housed under a quasi-public development agency, makes Baltimore Main Streets program different in a fundamental way. It reflects that the local state sees neighborhood commercial revitalization as an economic development strategy rather than neighborhood service provision or community development. Being part of the quasi-public
development agency, the Baltimore Main Streets program also echoes another neoliberal priorities, which institutional and economic efficiency are emphasized.

When the program was first created in 2000, the entire Division of Commercial Revitalization, including the Baltimore Main Streets program, was housed under the Department of Community and Housing but later moved to the BDC. As advertised in the program handbook, the Baltimore Main Streets program is the first and the only city-wide Main Street program housed under an economic development agency (Baltimore Main Streets 2009), with a connotation on its efficiency and its power of program implementation. To program officials, being housed under this high profile agency means attention, efficiency, and direct access to the city officials and power brokers. When the program was part of the Department of Community and Housing, it receives much less attention in this large department where housing and social service are relatively more important than commercial revitalization. To commercial revitalization officials, it makes more sense to be part of Baltimore Development Corporation, to have direct access to the business community and resources (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, interview by author, November 15, 2004).

Being housed under BDC not only means that the program is supported by a well-funded agency, but also that different kind of strategies are involved in program operation. Baltimore Main Streets is the only city-wide Main Street program that can use eminent domain to acquire abundant properties for commercial revitalization (Baltimore Main Streets 2009). According to a
program official, it makes acquisition of vacant commercial property easier for other types of development (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009). In addition, it has the authority to revise the neighborhood Urban Renewal Plan, which controls the land use and urban design guidelines of the commercial districts. According to a program official who worked as a business specialist, being in BDC helps him “serve as kind of a conduit for information,” compared to other city departments (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009). The leadership of the agency helps promote events, generate media and political attention, and helps to “move things forward”. He asserts the benefits of being a division under BDC, saying that “the nice thing is we have the access to the city government. . . in order to get things done.”

This move signified the city’s recognition of neighborhood commercial revitalization as an economic development strategy, one with the goals of business creation and retention, job creation, and property development at a city-wide level, rather than a division of work under each community. As a quasi-public agency, BDC has money, information, planning strategy and political access to move things forward. In Baltimore, where layers of bureaucracy often slowed change, “getting things done” has become equivalent to efficiency for those who seek changes.

Being housed under the BDC, Main Street officials have the opportunities to demonstrate a different approach to economic development, which is a focus on small business development. While BDC provides the annual funding for the
Main Street program, it is a challenge to work with economic development officials whose vision and focus is often on large scale projects rather than on small scale changes and improvements. Speaking of retail development, the director of Baltimore Main Streets described what BDC often focuses on is identifying chains and attracting them to the city.

At one point they were talking about Wal-Mart which you know Wal-Mart and Main Street just don’t mix. But for BDC overall, it would be great to bring a Wal-Mart into the city. Main Street maybe not so much, because it might kill one of our neighborhoods. So I think that can be difficult, sort of making that bridge and making it all work. But they make sure we get funded every year, so... [laugh] (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009)

She continues:

I don’t think they [officials in BDC] always see the value in small business. Even though I am like, “You may bring in three businesses this year, where we [Main Street program] are touching like a thousand every year. You know that our businesses hire mostly Baltimore city residents, yours don’t.” I mean I’m not always sure if they get that value, even though it is clearly there.... As we are able to quantify our results more, we’ll be able to show them, “Hey, we can bring in more tax revenue because you know you may have a Target that is x-size and in that same x-size footprint I can have a hundred businesses in there.” You know what I mean? And they are going to generate more tax revenue than your one Target. But I have got to make that argument for them, I don’t think they are necessarily onboard that train yet. So it’s just a paradigm shift. (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009).

As a city-wide program, the Baltimore Main Streets program tracked the changes in small businesses along these neighborhood commercial corridors, as a way to demonstrate the viability of the program to decision makers. One of the primary responsibilities of a neighborhood Main Street manager is to document the program’s progress by tracking changes within their designated area annually to the city-wide coordinator.
According to reports from Main Street managers, from 2000 to 2008, 304 net businesses opened, resulting in 907 new full-time and 483 part-time jobs in the city. Baltimore Main Streets completed 460 new facade renovations that helped to spur $5.8 million in private investment. For every $1.00 of public funds invested in Baltimore’s Main Street neighborhoods in 2008, $5.30 in private investment resulted. (Baltimore Development Corporation 2008)

Whether these changes are correlated with the Main Street program existence is hard to prove, making justifications for the program already a great challenge. At the same time, getting information on those microenterprises and mom-and-pop stores is extremely difficult; there is no existing data to analyze. Without more statistics to prove their success, Main Street impact remains the touchstones of politicians but arguably not an actual viable tool for development for economic officials, compared to the large projects. Yet the most fundamental challenge is that these neighborhood Main Street organizations have to speak the same language of economic development officials, using the same rhetoric of job creation, public-private partnership, and economic efficiency to make sure the program remains under the Mayor’s radar and gets funded.

Main Street’s spatial focus on neighborhood business district indeed provides an opportunity to incorporate small independent businesses as part of the city’s economic development strategy. It is one of the Main Street’s areas of emphasis on the Four-Point Approach: economic restructuring, which emphasizes both business retention and recruitment. But in reality, this particular point is the weakest link in the Four-Point model implementation due to the lack of resources, both in financial and human resources. The allocation of the city’s funding to a new Main Street program on an annual base only includes
money for façade improvements, promotional events and salary for a full-time Main Street manager. While every design and promotion committee in a neighborhood Main Street organization both gets some financial resources to work with, the economic restructuring doesn’t. In addition to lack of financial resources, it is also the hardest committee to attract and train volunteer. Quoting the director of the Baltimore Main Streets program as saying:

And it’s not sexy, let’s face it. It’s easier to talk about teaching kids how to read than it is “Let’s help a small business” because everybody assumes small businesses are wealthy and not everybody sort of sees the bridge to the other impacts that small businesses have, such as how it can positively impact a residential area. So people don’t want to do it as much, people don’t get it, it is the hardest to train. You get people who say, “I want to do economic restructuring” and they are convinced they are going to get that Starbucks in their neighborhood and you can’t tell them otherwise. It’s difficult. (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009)

Business retention, which is to help existing businesses develop business plans and expand their customer base, is even more challenging than business recruitment. As volunteers are typically only free at night and merchants leave after the stores close, the traditional idea of economic retention, like helping merchants to transform and look for new markets, is unlikely to happen. Moreover, a non-tangible job like this is hard to recruit volunteers. Working with people with their business plan is much more difficult than designing pretty storefronts or organizing events. In speaking of his experience in working with neighborhood merchants, a Main Street manager pointed out:

[T]here’s business owners out there who don’t want any involvement whatsoever. They don’t want somebody to come in and try to give them help because in their mind, everything is perfect and it’s their way or the highway. And you’ve got other people that are always open to getting
better, that are always open to being involved.... (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 4, 2010)

Under this circumstance, what neighborhood Main Street organizations can accomplish the most is the design aspect, such as façade and streetscape improvements, which are visible and measurable and can create a sense of achievement that keep volunteer’s commitment to the organization. Therefore, the economic restructuring often becomes the one-person committee, where the neighborhood Main Street manager is the only participant and resource. With some exceptions, implementation of economic restructuring in Baltimore neighborhoods is more about business recruitment than retention: handing out the welcome letter with resource pamphlets, locating storefronts for potential businesses and compiling a wish list of what kind of business residents want in the neighborhood. Improving the physical appearance of the businesses and the district as a whole becomes the primary solution to help existing merchants. Business retention often becomes a self help matter of the individual business owner. As the structural constraints of the program (volunteer-driven) and financial resources, the Main Street program become a place-based solution that delivers the city’s economic development agenda at the very local level while the idea of business retention, a people-oriented strategy, is diminished.

Governance vs. Government: The Reality

By acting as an entrepreneur and coordinator of the program, we can see the city’s increasing emphasis on governance by building partnership with local
communities in economic development. However, as Macleod and Goodwin (1999) suggest, the idea of governance is still in the shadow of government. In reality, the idea of efficiency and collaboration seldom happens when working with the government. In speaking of the major challenges or constraints of developing inner-city commercial property, a neighborhood Main Street manager responded:

In Baltimore, we keep changing mayors. I mean, when O’Malley was elected governor, Sheila Dixon took over mid-term. Now Sheila Dixon is convicted and serving. And honestly, a lot of the work that we do does directly involve the City. Even pedestrian street lights; I mean, you can’t just put them in yourself. You know, you work with... the Department of Transportation has to approve everything; it takes three years instead of six months like it would with a private contractor. I mean, that’s why working with the City is the biggest challenge. But in Baltimore it’s a tough challenge because every couple of years you start over, back to square one... certainly working with the City is a challenge anyway because they just move very slow. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, April 12, 2010)

Having partnership with the city on commercial revitalization should give the neighborhood Main Street organization direct access with city officials. In fact, they still have to go through the same bureaucracy and regulatory environment as others, which doesn’t make Main Street much more effective than any of the existing neighborhood organizations. When I asked about the relationship between the merchant association and the Main Street organization in her neighborhood, a manager replied:

I think that they like us and they're supportive of us, appreciate us. But, at the same time, I also think that they don’t... they may not see us as particularly effective. I think a lot of people assume that because of our relationship with Baltimore Development Corp...I don’t know how much you know about Baltimore Development Corp., about it being a Quasi-City agency, and people don’t really absorb that; what is a Quasi-City agency?
What does that mean? I guess they think that it should be easier for me to get answers from City offices or Baltimore Development Corp. and it just isn’t; it just isn’t easier for me to get that information. ....... there’s an assumption that I may be able to get things done and it’s just hard. You know, I have to go through the same channels they do. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, May 17, 2010)

Politics, also influence a city’s ability to act as an entrepreneur and manage the city based solely on economic rationales. Despite the fact that the official criteria for Main Street designation is through a competitive process based on the measurements of physical characteristics, community commitment, neighborhood vision, and market conditions, the actual designation involves a certain deal of urban politics. The inclusion of several distressed neighborhoods in the first round of program designation was not based on their competitiveness, but the influence of local council representatives and their empowerment zone status. As a Main Street official describes, “with Pigtown and Pennsylvania, that’s a great example of when politics meets on-the-ground decision-making.” (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009)

Another example is the designation of Brooklyn, a neighborhood located in the south of the harbor and often perceived as a political territory of an adjacent county. One of the key factors for designating this particular neighborhood was mainly based on its geographic location and its affiliation with another city’s priority initiative “Healthy Neighborhoods”, not based on those official application criteria. As a city Main Street official put it, giving a Main Street designation to Brooklyn implies it is to put additional “feather on their back”, not because of their readiness and commitment for commercial revitalization
(Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009). As a result, the areas with Main Street designations range from the most competitive neighborhoods to the most distressed sections in Baltimore. For politicians these designations become rhetoric to demonstrate how comprehensively the program has reached various parts of the city, both socio-economically and geographically. This may provide the opportunity for those under-resourced areas to have a chance to participate in the program in the first place, but at the same time their capacity to implement will vary as the result. As Gates (2005) learned from the inactive Main Street organizations, the Main Street one-size-fit-all strategy is not the solution for commercial revitalization as some communities may need more flexibility in addressing their specific needs than others. Additionally, the self-help theme embedded in the Baltimore Main Streets program, especially the financial commitment and volunteer-driven approach, could put a large token on commercial revitalization in neighborhoods of deprivation.

Conclusion

The Baltimore Main Streets program reflects the national trend on a greater attention to neighborhood commercial revitalization and the emerging role of the local state to facilitate that process. This initiative echoes the current neoliberal approach to public policy, which highlights the idea of competitiveness, partnership and economic efficiency. As part of the redevelopment agency, Baltimore Main Streets embraces the priority of economic development, to
promote neighborhood business districts collectively to a larger audience, including local and regional shoppers, and potential investors nationwide. The city-wide program features several innovative strategies such as collective promotion, free architecture service, and eminent domain for property acquisition. It provides an opportunity for a more inclusive approach to economic development that incorporates the development of small, independently owned businesses at the neighborhood level. Yet when public resources devoted on physical appearance and promotion of the district, business recruitment seems to take precedence over retention, which undermine the benefits of existing businesses as the economic condition of the district improves. After all, the idea of partnership can be easily constructed and easily dissolved. The idea of collaboration still works under the shadow of government where the bureaucracy, regulatory and politics diminish the economic rationales. Neighborhood Main Street organizations found themselves began with great expectations at the same time constrained by the self-help scheme the program built upon in the first place.
Chapter 4

The Implementation of the Main Street Program
in Baltimore Neighborhoods

Despite the official statistics to showcase the overall program success, I do find implementation of the Main Street program and the paths to commercial revitalization varied across neighborhoods. I classified eleven Main Street neighborhoods in Baltimore into three categories: competitive; transitional; and redevelopment. This classification is made by analyzing data from site visits and interviews. It is also based on comparing several socio-economic characteristics of the districts and nearby areas, including commercial vacancy, housing vacancy, crime rate, median income, and residential rehabilitation rate at a city-wide level using thematic mapping (Figure 6-7). In the following section, I compare how the variations on the implementation of the Main Street Four Point Approach--Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring--in each type of neighborhood.

I want to highlight that neighborhood change or gentrification is a process, rather than a distinct and fixed category. While these three categories of neighborhoods help the researcher to contrast and compare the difference between neighborhoods, it does not attempt to simplify the complexity of neighborhoods and their process of change. These categories should be seen as
Figure 6. Main Street typology and socio-economic context of the neighborhoods. The location of Main Street districts are mapped in their relationship to neighborhood commercial vacancy rate, residential rehabilitation rate and violent crime rate.
Figure 7. Main Street typology and socio-economic context of the neighborhoods. The location of Main Street districts are mapped in their relationship to neighborhood housing vacancy rate and median income.
three stages in the spectrum of neighborhood changes. As the results, even Main Street districts under the same category experienced different stage of changes not only due to its residential market condition, but also due to its business composition, historical context, racial makeup, social organizations and state intervention.

**Competitive Neighborhood Commercial Districts**

Competitive neighborhood commercial districts are areas that have an active or at least functioning business association surrounded by a large portion of middle-upper income residents with disposable income. They are located within or surrounded by the most competitive and popular residential real estate markets in Baltimore. The major advocate for Main Street designation often comes from the existing business association, with the support of neighborhood associations. The overall occupancy rate in the commercial properties are relatively high compared to the rest of the city, with several long-term businesses as well as new destination businesses, such as boutiques, antique stores, and restaurants (Figure 8). A gentrified commercial scene may have emerged prior to Main Street program designation, but the Main Street status and associated activities have help speed up commercial revitalization to the current rate. Issues such as rising rent, parking, and congestion have emerged as areas become competitive in the market. The Main Street neighborhoods included in this category are Federal Hill, Fell’s Point, and Hampden, with a newly designated neighborhood (Hamilton-Lauraville) that is moving into this category. Federal
Hill and Fell’s Point are located near downtown Inner Harbor, and are considered as two of the most gentrified neighborhoods in the city.

Figure 8. Street scene in Federal Hill. Restaurants, boutiques and high-end stores are commonly seen in competitive districts.

*Transitional neighborhood commercial districts*

Transitional neighborhood commercial districts in general are located in areas at the borders of moderate-affluent neighborhoods and lower income neighborhoods. Surrounding residential neighborhoods are relatively stable, or have been increasingly popular in the local residential real estate market. A business or merchant association may or may not exist in the commercial district. Vacancy is higher than the competitive commercial districts, but still occupied by
a concentration of small businesses that serve mainly local lower-income populations. Chain and independently owned businesses both exist, with some newly opened destination businesses like restaurants and cafes (Figure 9). Pedestrian traffic in the commercial corridor is higher than those in the redevelopment areas, as the commercial district usually serves as a transportation hub for the neighborhood or nearby areas. Crime or the perception of crime is often the issue that jeopardizes the revitalization of the commercial district. Drug related crimes may be present on the streets in transitional neighborhoods, but the perception of crime is often due to the concentration of African American shoppers, rather than actual violent crime.

Figure 9. Street scene in Waverly. Chain stores, independently-own businesses and vacant storefronts coexist in the transitional districts.
Waverly, Highlandtown, Belair Edison, and Brooklyn are Main Street designated neighborhoods in this category. These are improving areas but without the presence of large capital reinvestments.

*Redevelopment neighborhood commercial districts*

Redevelopment neighborhood commercial districts, including Pennsylvania Avenue, Pigtown, and East Monument Street, are commercial districts located in or between distressed lower-income neighborhoods where both residential and commercial vacancy rates are high (Figure 10). Most of the businesses are

![Figure 10. Street scene on Pennsylvania Avenue. Most of the storefront remain vacant despite the recent façade improvement efforts by the city.](image)

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6 East Monument Street is a commercial corridor with around 150 businesses. As a former program official described, it is one of the most vital commercial districts in the city. I include this neighborhood in the redevelopment based on the dominant redevelopment-oriented discourse surrounding this area.
neighborhood-serving but are struggling (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009). Crime issues, such as drug dealing and prostitution, are more apparent on the street. Foot traffic is not as busy as it is in the transitional areas, and most shoppers are African-American males, with fewer female shoppers. Safety perception is a combination of actual and imaginary crime.

State-led large-scale improvement projects dominate the revitalization efforts on the commercial strips, compared to those grassroots, market-led incremental changes in the competitive or transitional neighborhoods. The commercial district and surrounding areas are included in a redevelopment plan, with different themes in different Main Street districts. Large scale residential redevelopment projects are often underway. The business districts are perceived as complementary efforts of retail development to residential development. These districts are designated as Main Streets due to their empowerment zone status. Their designation was often based on a political decision rather than their market or social competitiveness (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009) (Table 2).

Implementation of the Four Point Approach by Neighborhood Typology

*Design*

The point of “Design” in the Main Street Four Point Approach has a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation Year</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Area (Acres)</th>
<th>Retail Trade</th>
<th>Accommodation and Food Services</th>
<th>Other Services</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(count)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>(count)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fells Point</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>302.44</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hampden</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>80.63</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton-Lauraville</td>
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<td>active</td>
<td>80.67</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Waverly</td>
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<td>active</td>
<td>44.45</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brocklynn</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>37.81</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redevelopment</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>21.47</td>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>East Monument</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>44.70</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pennsylvania Avenue</td>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>13</td>
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Source: Baltimore Main Streets; City of Baltimore Enterprise GIS; Reference USA US Employer Business Dataset, 2009
different degree of impact depending on the amount of private capital available in the neighborhood. As a reimbursement program, façade improvements have an upfront cost to the applicant, which is paid by either the merchant or property owner. Businesses in the competitive districts have more entrepreneurs and property owners with capital, business plans, and design ideas. As a result, not only do they have capital to take advantage of the façade improvement grant immediately, but they also need less design and managerial assistance from the Main Street program. A former manager of Federal Hill Main Street program, states:

    Federal Hill definitely has some advantages. I mean, it was a neighborhood where the people came in who had money. So the people that started businesses and brought new businesses in there were people who had some money to invest, in large part, so they were luckier than... you know, they started out in a better spot than many... [When] somebody fixed up their façade, they ended up rehabbing their building. So instead of a $2000 or $4000 façade improvement, in most cases it was a $100,000 building rehab that got $2000 for reimbursement... In Federal Hill, everybody had money, so the façade grants flew off the shelf [right after the designation]. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, April 12, 2010)

Another former manager in Federal Hill notes an opposite trend after eight years of program implementation, after the area has become the trendiest commercial district in the city:

    The one funny thing in Federal Hill [now], we almost never did façade projects there and the reason is because the people that buy the businesses or buy the property there already have money and they would rather just do their own thing than have to answer to somebody and get half of it paid for. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, May 17, 2010)
While early façade improvements have had a contagious effect on revitalization, the assistance for building renovations has been less emphasized as the capital moves in. As the revitalization takes place, the Main Street program in these districts focus more on the larger collective aspect of the district, such as street improvements, parking, historic designation and managing public spaces of the district and surrounding areas.

In the transitional commercial districts, where businesses often do not possess as much capital as those in the competitive districts, façade improvements often occur at a smaller scale. It is often about the removal of plastic signs, re-emphasizing the historical look of the place, or simply making the district more clean and appealing. Not only does the façade improvement money trickle out more slowly in the transitional neighborhoods, but managers often have to come up with alternative resources of improvements with fewer restrictions, such as investment caps or reimbursements to accommodate the economic conditions of the neighborhood business. A neighborhood Main Street manager said:

One of the things we did that I think was unofficial. . . we had a $50,000 community legacy grant and. . . we used it for painting and signage all up and down the avenue. It was not. . . the purpose of it was to clean up and spruce up; you know paint, unfortunately, doesn’t last that long and signs don’t last that long. Businesses come and go and that sort of thing, but it was nice in that it was...we encouraged people to be colorful. So that. . . and you know, it did work really well at the time to tempt people into doing something with their own place, to doing a larger façade project. It was also give-away money, it was not a match. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, May 17, 2010)
Another important role of physical improvements in transitional districts is to show signs of reinvestment and care in that particular district. A Main Street manager in a transitional district is uncertain about the impact of façade improvements for the businesses, but she says the impact on the district overall is positive:

I’ve never heard anybody say my business has... I’ve made more money since I did this improvement... [It] is a major artery into and out of Baltimore, so you have a lot of people that drive up and down every day that may not necessarily stop there or live there or that’s not their final destination, but so many people have remarked oh, it’s looking better there. You know, I think that it’s starting to change the... it’s not the property owner and residents’ opinions, but maybe the larger community is starting to recognize some of the improvements.” (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, May 17, 2010)

A major issue for the transitional areas is the defensive approach to storefront design, such as fencing up with bar or using high counters. These reflect merchants’ fears of crime in the inner city neighborhoods, but ironically reinforce the perception of crime and make the shoppers feel even more unsafe. Therefore, the point of “Design,” mainly façade improvements, in this type of neighborhood is to persuade merchants to undo those defense practices and make stores more visually accessible to shoppers (Figure 11-12).

In both Highlandtown and another transitional district, Waverly, “Design” is also about educating merchants to work collectively to keep the street clean. Another major issue for the transitional neighborhoods is that long-term or ethnic-oriented businesses in general are not usually active in taking part in the

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7 These is very similar to what Patch (2008) found in the older ethnic owned stores in Williamsburg.
Figure 11: A storefront in Belair-Edison fenced up with bars due to the fear of crime.

Figure 12: A recently renovated storefront in Belair Edison. As part of the façade improvements, the bars have been removed to the interior of the store to make the storefront look more welcoming and less defensive.
collective effort, such as keeping the street clean. In Patch’s (2008) research in Williamsburg, he also found that new businesses and women-owned businesses in particular, will pay more attention to maintenance than old/ethnic male owners. To many existing businesses in transitional neighborhoods, the motivation for keeping the store transparent or to keeping the street clean could be due to cultural differences as well as a paradigm shift.

Because the merchants in redevelopment districts are often even poorer or more marginalized than those in the transitional or competitive neighborhoods, chances are they are less likely to take advantage of the façade improvement grants. With less capital, some of merchants even went out of business because of the inappropriate amount of investment they put on storefront renovation (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, August 09, 2010). Due to the amount of vacancy and the level of disrepair, the implementation of the Design aspect of the Main Street program in these districts often relies on the state (or the City) to take the initiative. Examples of large-scale physical improvement projects include: the two blocks-long façade improvements on Pennsylvania Avenue, along with the redevelopment of several cultural-entertainment facilities to market the area as an African-American tourist destination. The canopy removal and street improvements along the entire East Monument commercial district took place in the early phase of the designation. In Pigtown, parcels have been assembled by the Baltimore Development Corporation for several larger-scale residential and commercial redevelopment projects, since its market potential has been recognized due to its strategic
location near major employers. In general, façade improvements in redevelopment districts aim to improve buildings which have been in a state of disrepair for quite some time but at the same act as complementary efforts for redevelopment projects

Promotion

Promotional events in competitive districts, whether it is a festival or street fair, work both as crowd generators to increase foot traffic in the shopping districts, and to provide an opportunity to showcase the changes to a larger audience. As the Federal Hill Main Street manager describes, her primary task as a manager is to promote the visible changes through extensive media exposure and public relations. Whether they are about the physical improvements or new businesses, they mean nothing if no one is aware of that. She said:

> When we had flower baskets on... Channel 13 did like a whole ten-minute thing on the revitalization of Federal Hill. Something like that has such an enormous impact, as much as the baskets themselves, because flowers don't help if not a soul looks at them.” (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, April 12, 2010)

And she continues:

> [Public Relations is] as important as the work itself. You know, people need to know what you're doing. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, April 12, 2010)

Promotional events, in this regard, extend the visual strategy of physical improvements. The manager in Hamilton-Laurelville, a Main Street district newly
designated in 2008, with emerging art-associated establishments and restaurants, explains her focus on design and promotion. She said:

I felt like design [façade improvements] and promotion would be the most visible, so that the people that live in the community as well as the business owners, as well as commuters who just shoot past the neighborhood all the time, I wanted them to see something right away. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 04, 2010)

And she further describes:

And promotions went hand in hand with that [design] because if you could see a visual change, and then you could also see events happening at the same time, it was just a way to get the neighborhood and the surrounding area, the community, to realize, hey, something’s going on here and to start to pay better attention. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 04, 2010)

Promotion, in transitional neighborhoods, has a different goal from that of competitive neighborhoods. For the most part, it is about changing the perception of crime and generating a sense of community. Most of the commercial districts in this category remain vital, with many shoppers walking on the street. Yet the perception of crime often jeopardizes revitalization efforts in these commercial districts. When we discussed what constitutes the perception of crime, a Main Street manager pointed out:

Unfortunately, there are people who have issues with race and when they see a lot of dark faces, they immediately think that that neighborhood is dangerous, which is unfortunate, but that’s their perception. So you are going to have people out there who are going to think that, without any knowledge at all of the neighborhoods. The truth is, for the most part, we have a very safe business district. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 04, 2010)
The perception of crime come from activities such as drug dealing and prostitution, but also come from the concentration of minority shoppers, such as African Americans or Latinos. To deal with both real and imaginary crime, promotional events in transitional neighborhoods emphasize how to bring residents, especially those from the more affluent parts of the neighborhood, to the commercial district, and to convince them that this area is safe to walk and shop.

The idea of changing perceptions also extends to the idea of community. As some commercial district became disinvested by mainstream capital, and later filled with marginal businesses, these districts become segregated from the nearby middle-upper income residents. Promotional events in transitional neighborhoods work in part to restore the concept that the commercial district is the center of urban village. Therefore, they often feature events that are geared toward local residents rather shoppers or visitors. For example, the only neighborhood promotional event that Belair-Edison hosts is the “Back to School” event, featuring free school supplies, hair-dos, and a hair fashion show, to attract residents to walk and shop on the commercial district. A similar community-oriented theme is operated by Waverly, where the annual National Night-Out Kick-Off Parade encourages people to come to the business districts at night and generate an atmosphere of community spirit.

The goal of generating a sense of community also extends to new immigrant businesses. Highlandtown, a former Greek working-class neighborhood, has lately become a destination for Latino businesses and residents. While these
businesses become the force for revitalization, promoting the Main Street idea to them has become quite a challenge due to language and cultural barriers (Figure 13). As the manager describes:

A lot of the businesses now are Latino and there’s not only a language barrier, but there’s a cultural barrier and that’s been very difficult. And even... you know, even if you get people that can speak on your behalf or if you get a merchant that speaks English, it’s just a paradigm; the way they go about business is not the way [we do business] . . . There’s a trust issue. ....A lot of times, if I go into a Latino business, even if they speak good English and I explain to them who I am and what I’m doing, they think I work for the City and they think the City is bad, so they don’t want me there. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, May 17, 2010)

Figure 13. Highlandtown Main Street office window display. The storefront window displayed information in Both English & Spanish.

To help them overcome the barriers and trust issues, the Highlandtown Main Street program just began to organize a World Cup festival, a block party and a sidewalk sale in order to engage the Latino merchants and the greater Latino
community because “this is a huge day for them” (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, May 17, 2010). Its effectiveness is too new to gauge, yet it is gaining greater support from all parts of the community through its promotional events, which appears to be an aim for any transitional area that is trying to improve.

Promotion in a redevelopment neighborhood is to generate a community spirit and promote the neighborhood to potential investors. In some cases, they try to bridge the commercial districts with the rest of the neighborhood to generate a sense of community. In others, the target audiences are prospective residents and potential investors, to put the area on the map. As a Main Street manager pointed out:

[T]he goal[of promotional events] is really to market and promote the neighborhood, so it brings people down to the area that have never even heard of Pigtown and don’t know where it is. So they come to these events and they see the potential of the neighborhood... So it’s really to market and promote to get people to live here, to work here and to open up businesses. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 10, 2010)

As most of the destination businesses are long gone, restoring the glory of the past has become the theme for promotion. Whether it was the entertainment hub for African American (Pennsylvania Avenue) or an arterial to transport pigs and other animals (Pigtown), events serve to highlight the history of the place. For example, the Pig Run event, created by the Pigtown Main Street neighborhood organization, features a pig running contest, has become a popular local and regional event for entertainment and family fun. The selected historic theme creates a sense of nostalgia, and works as a mask to simplify the current
conditions, whether it is vacancy, crime or disinvestment. Commercial revitalization efforts are used as signs of improvement to lure more investments to the area. Promotion, in the end, is less about increasing traffic to the existing businesses but to celebrate the history and restore the glory, making the area friendlier to investors.

Organization

Main Street organizations in competitive districts often work in parallel with business associations on commercial revitalization. While the merchant association works more as a political entity that solely represents the interest of merchants, the participants in the Main Street organization are more diverse, depending on who the board members and volunteers are. As independent, non-profit organizations, neighborhood Main Street organizations in the competitive districts often are not constrained by other community power structures or political agendas, and try to act as a liaison among groups of different interests in the commercial districts.

In terms of program implementation of the aspect of “Organization,” volunteer recruitment is key, as the economic condition of nearby residential districts seems to make a big difference because affluent residents not only have money to spend but also have time to volunteer. As a volunteer driven program, this becomes one of the key ingredients to success, as the city-wide Main Street coordinator program describes:
I think in these [competitive] areas, the residents don’t seem to be struggling with other issues. Like they are not struggling with how to pay their mortgage or like to keep the lights on or something like that, so they are able to refocus their efforts, like volunteering [Main Streets].

(Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 10, 2010)

These districts have committed members and volunteers who can devote their time and enthusiasm to the area where they live and invest. In addition, they are more likely to recruit volunteers with professional skills like design, promotion and marketing to implement the four points of the Main Street program. They also have better connections to use neighborhood or local resources for their activities. Through personal connections, Main Street managers such those in as Federal Hill and Hamilton-Laurelville have employed local college students to do street surveying and high school students to maintain the social-networking sites such as blogs or Facebook through the community service program.

In transitional districts, Main Street is usually housed under a strong umbrella community association only with a focus solely on the commercial district. Main Street managers, in this particular context, can be more focused spatially on the revitalization of commercial districts since the umbrella organization takes care of the rest. Compared to volunteering resources in the competitive districts, transitional areas often have trouble recruiting long-term volunteers, especially in the area of economic restructuring. Not only do residents have less time and money for volunteer work, but the long-term segregation from commercial space also make helping business a mental barrier. The social relationship and attachments between business and residents in the traditional
urban village has disappeared in the recent decades, as both the neighborhood and commercial district decline. Rather than reaching out, the remaining businesses serving lower-income population that have taken over the commercial space have become alien to many residents. In describing the challenge of recruiting volunteers for business development, a manager pointed out:

Residents in particular, a lot of times, are under... or have the mentality of why should I spend my time trying to make a business more money? They should be doing the exact opposite; businesses should be out here in the residential area giving back, whether that’s financial or use of their time, whatever it may be. So it’s hard to get over that mentality of why should I help a business when they can help themselves? They’re making a ton of money, right? They have the resources to do it and I shouldn’t have to help them. So that’s a hurdle that’s tough to get over. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 4, 2010)

Main Street organizations in transitional districts, however, often have very good connections and networks with the residential community or other neighborhood activists due to the embedded organizational structure within an active community association. But ironically, the good relationship does not extend to the businesses in the district they serve. In part it is because commercial districts in transitional neighborhoods often do not have an active business community; either it is no longer active due to general decline, or it never existed in the first place. Therefore organization, in part, is to mobilize merchants to address issues such as trash collection, safety, updating the urban renewal plan, or doing collective promotion. Things like these may seem to be intuitive to new entrepreneurs but can be frequently cultural barriers to older or ethnic-oriented businesses owners.
Merchants in transitional districts in general have less time to volunteer or even participate in the Main Street meeting. Often running a one-person store, it is impossible for them to attend meetings during the day. Meeting at night is not an alternative since most of the business owners leave at night, since they do not live in the same neighborhood. So it is difficult to get business owners to attend Main Street meetings. Businesses are often as the passive receivers of physical improvements, rather than active participants in the decision making process.

In the redevelopment commercial areas, where residents often struggle with other basic needs and remaining marginal businesses often just try to keep their store open, the manager is the only human resource available to the program. Housed under a redevelopment organization, Main Street, or retail development in general, is often very insignificant as the neighborhood is struggling with many other issues. Therefore, the accountability of the program is left to the manager, his/her skills and performance, as well as individual preference on what to emphasize. When discussing about the program implementation in East Monument Street, a former Baltimore Main Streets official described that a new manager almost inherited an empty cabinet and zero volunteers as she took over the position after four years of designation (Interview with Baltimore Main Street official, interview by author, November 15, 2004).

In Pennsylvania Avenue, the façade improvements comprised a large scale make-over made possible by the federal government’s stimulus money. The Main Street manager position here has experienced higher turnover, whether due to a personal issue or the personality conflict with the embedded organization. Much
of the time, they struggle among the voices of so many different neighborhood organizations. As a Main Street specialist puts it, the problem with Pennsylvania Avenue is there are too many organizations with too many different agendas. It is hard to get anything done (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009).

Pigtown, another redevelopment area, has experienced signs of residential gentrification due to its accessibility to downtown Baltimore and Washington DC. With lots of residential and commercial vacancy, volunteers are absent from both residential and business communities. When I asked about the organization of the Pigtown Main Street, the manager joked about the fact that he is the only person running the four committees. There are only four board members in the Pigtown Main Street organization and they keep changing. Having a design background, the manager has focused on design and promotion. Despite the manager’s preference, design and promotion coincidentally two of the most implemented points in most Main Street districts due to the visibility factor and financial resources available.

*Economic Restructuring*

When the market was on the rise, Economic Restructuring in competitive districts was about keeping up the trend as a regional destination, and at the same time making a good balance with the needs of residents. Federal Hill, for example, is known as a destination for a younger crowd due to the large concentration of bar and night life establishments. To serve the needs of
residents as well as diversify the customer base of the area, the efforts on economic restructuring, or business development as a preferred term used by Federal Hill Main Street, restaurants have been one of the target business categories to recruit. Recruiting neighborhood serving businesses such as grocery store has been challenging due to smaller footprint of commercial properties as well as lack of off-street parking space in traditional commercial districts. Developing housing such as condos on the former non-residential properties or on the upper floors of storefront properties has been the trend, as residential real estate becomes more desirable after the revitalization of the commercial district. When describing the impact of commercial revitalization on the larger neighborhood, a former manager of Federal Hill Main Street said:

So when I took it [Federal Hill Main Street] over, like I said, we had 25% vacancy. In the time that I had 84 new businesses open, there was also that 47 building rehab and some of these rehabs were massive, were multi-million dollar jobs because for example, there was one developer down there who took the old South Baltimore General Hospital, which is an entire block-sized building, and turned it into condos. He also took an old theater and turned it into office space. And these are all buildings that had been abandoned, and an old school and turned it into condos. So it helped a lot that we had investors in the neighborhood who also saw the potential and were willing to put some money into it. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, April 12, 2010)

In these competitive Main Streets neighborhoods, such as Fells Point, Federal Hill and Hampden, the demand for residential rentals is driving up rent prices. Therefore, part of the economic restructuring strategy is to persuade property owners to convert the upper floors of commercial properties into profitable apartment space (Honeywill 2005).
The economic balance in competitive districts is also about the balance between independent, small businesses and chain stores. As the areas become prosperous, small businesses begin to receive pressure from high property valuation, redevelopment of housing, increasing rent, and the competition from chain stores. Main Street designations accelerate the pace of revitalization while directly or indirectly gentrifying the districts. Before and after designation, these competitive districts have experienced the transition from what Zukin and others (2009) called “two different stages of commercial gentrification,” which is first the transition from the boutique and creative consumption spaces, and second the arrival of chain stores that result in issues of rising rent and displacement (113). Yet the impact of chains varies by type of business, and the traditional neighborhood serving ones seem to suffer the most.

For example, a Baltimore Sun article describes the impact of Walmart on local Main Street businesses in this passage: “Though merchants in direct competition with the larger retailers have suffered, Federal Hill’s niche stores — offering antiques, fresh flowers and baked goods — are flourishing.” (Buckelew 2002) As Don, a shop owner who sells fishing rods, tackle and bait, said in an interview: “We don't do the business we used to do. There's nothing I can sell that [Wal-Mart] doesn't sell.” His business has to rely on the customers who do not have transportation to the chain stores. On the other hand, a restaurant owner in Federal Hill suggests he benefits from the opening of the new [chain] retailers in Port Covington since they have brought in a new influx of shoppers who stop for lunch in Federal Hill. "We sell things Wal-Mart doesn't carry,” he said (ibid.).
Economic Restructuring in the transitional neighborhoods is about filling the vacancy among the existing businesses. Without clearly defined characteristics, change whether a chain or boutique, are both welcome in these areas. As a merchant in Waverly describes: "The problem with gentrification is that it just changes one [economic] strata for another, but the gentrification here isn't changing the strata, it's just filling the houses." (Rector 2008) With vacancies prevalent, making space available for the entry of chains receive less opposition from the local community. As a result, the process of restructuring in these transitional commercial districts creates a better diversity of businesses and services, providing a wider array of goods for existing shoppers, and at the same time attracting new customers. If the rent in the area remains affordable for existing business, gentrification can benefit the district and neighborhood (Zukin et al. 2009).

The idea of Economic Restructuring also works within existing businesses. As long as new capital does not totally dominate the change of the districts, current businesses are considered the most important assets of the transitional commercial districts. The Main Street program encourages merchants to diversify their merchandise and change their window display, to appeal to a wider range of customers. For example, a Baltimore Business Journal article describes economic restructuring within a business in Waverly in this passage:

Sung, who has owned the Red Shed since 1991, is bullish on the future of Waverly. A few years ago, against conventional wisdom, he upgraded the merchandise at the dress shop, from bargain dresses to higher-priced name-brand fare. . . "They kept coming," he said. It was a
lesson in stereotyping the urban customer. Sung believes his new cafe will get a similar positive community response. (Ey 2003)

Significant changes in the economic structure in redevelopment districts have been minimal during the ten years of program implementation. Except in Pigtown, where creative consumption space such as galleries and yoga studios has recently emerged as the result of residential gentrification, no signs of economic change have occurred in other districts along with the beautification efforts made by the city. In redevelopment districts, it is less about “revitalization” of the commercial districts but rather about retail development as part of the redevelopment theme. Instead of rebuilding a community, the aim in economic restructuring of a commercial district is to market the area to potential buyers and investors via historical themes.

For example, in Penn Avenue, where the redevelopment focus is on using Jazz and Blues to foster African American heritage tourism, highlighting historic sites like clubs and theaters (Baltimore Development Corporation 2004). The only retail component, the Avenue Market, was consider to be part of the historical theme, as one of the popular public markets in the City. Formerly called “Harlem in Baltimore,” Penn Avenue is the most vital commercial and entertainment district for African Americans in Baltimore during segregation. Racial nostalgia helped reconstruct Penn Avenue as a tourist destination to trigger neighborhood redevelopment. The commercial district is the spatial center to develop and market the neighborhood for tourism (Boyd 2000).

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8 East Monument Street is the only area does not have a historical theme. As the key stakeholder, nearby Johns Hopkins dominates the redevelopment conversation and the discourse on the future of East Baltimore.
In Pigtown, with spacious historical housing stock and access to downtown, major institutions, and Washington DC, the redevelopment theme has mainly focused on gentrification and residential redevelopment. The façade improvement helps emerging business to restore buildings to a state of good repair while acting as complementary effort for redevelopment. The area initially used “Pigtown” as the theme to showcase the local heritage, but later changed the neighborhood name to “Washington Village” to make the residential real estate more attractive to an affluent population (Harlan 2006).

Lastly, in East Monument Street a bio-tech park and residential redevelopment nearby Johns Hopkins Medical campus has dominated the discourse on redevelopment while overshadowing all the existing grassroots efforts (Figure14-15). Although the former Main Street manager claimed that East Monument Street is one of the most vital commercial districts in the City, local media still portray East Baltimore as a "wasteland of crumbling, abandoned row houses" to support the redevelopment discourse (McWilliams 2002). As the commercial center for low-income residents, its vitality seems to be distanced from the redevelopment discourse. The paradox of Main Street in these particular neighborhoods is that while ostensibly helping channel the political attentions and resources to small businesses, the beautification efforts are signs of improvements and opportunities, attracting further large-scale redevelopments that may ultimately harm the existing marginal businesses (Table 3).
Figure 14. New housing development on the north side of East Monument Street

Figure 15. The empty blocks on north side of East Monument Street are fensed up with “My New East Side” banners. Redevelopment dominates the discourse in the area near East Monument Street and East Baltimore.
### Challenge and Opportunity of Main Street Program Implementation

**Revitalization vs. Gentrification**

Critics of preservation-based commercial revitalization or commercial gentrification in general argue that historic preservation favors services such as specialty retailing, like antique shops and boutique stores, which in turn limit job opportunities for local, lower-income residents (Sohmer and Lang 1998, 426). In an interview with the Main Street officials on the tendency toward specialty retailing when revitalizing traditional commercial districts, they expressed a sense of helplessness about the recruitment of neighborhood-serving businesses:

#### Table 3. Implementations of the Four Point Approach by Main Street Typology

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<th>Organization</th>
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There are no mom-and-pop stores and that’s what you’re going to traditionally find in an urban area. . . I think it is harder to recruit a neighborhood-serving [small] business because they just aren’t there. So either you are getting a cute, boutique, niche type of business or you are getting something you don’t even want, like check cashing and they also sell fried chicken and you can get your license renewed, I don’t know. You know what I mean? It just seems like there is no in-between. (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009)

Another official adds his comments:

The neighborhood-serving businesses just, there is not as many of them anymore. And that’s really unfortunate, I’m trying to think of the last few new businesses that we got that were actually neighborhood-serving and I don’t know that I necessarily want to call. . . Well I guess I could call a salon as one of those, which is probably the main type we’re going to get. (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009)

Unlike New York City, where traditional neighborhood serving establishments like banks, corner groceries, pharmacies, or hardware stores still remain⁹, neighborhood-serving mom-and-pop stores have almost disappeared from the retail landscape in cities like Baltimore, where inner city population and business have dramatically decreased following suburban flights. What have filled these traditional commercial spaces in the era of disinvestment are marginal businesses, such as pawn shops, tax services, and fast food stores that serve the lower-income portion of the city population who have less mobility to move or shop elsewhere (Figure 16). As a result, in many traditional commercial districts, “it’s easier to buy a single cigarette than it is a fresh apple,” as a Main Street official puts it (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009).

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⁹ This has been changing too in New York City in the recent decades.
Another issue with lack of neighborhood-oriented establishments is the trend of corporatization in neighborhood serving business. The array of goods and low prices they can provide has altered consumer preference. With big chains, a standard formula is a large commercial footprint for merchandise display as well as for parking, which is often what a traditional shopping district is incapable of providing. A Main Street official comments:

I see it more as a change in sort of a larger trend of commercial. . . I don’t know what you call it, commercial businesses, I guess, available. Because if you think about it, even out in the suburbs, the neighborhoods serving businesses are the big chains . . . I mean we have chains in our neighborhoods and I don’t have a problem with chains. But a lot of them need space and we don’t have space, that’s a big challenge. (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009)
In addition to parking, demography and the perception of crime are two other contributing factors that discourage the entry of neighborhood-serving chain stores. Especially in the lower-income neighborhoods, chain stores won’t come for space or economic reasons, but also because they fear crime. When a Main Street official highlights the challenge of bringing in a pharmacy to Pennsylvania Avenue, he describes:

How do you change the perception of danger or high crime in a neighborhood? And part of that is accurate statistics; we can get accurate stats from the city. But that is not going to change the perception.

And he further adds:

[Chain stores] will look at the demographics and they will say, “But I don’t see the income in the community that would allow us to turn a profit.” So we then fall back to trying to bring a mom-and-pop in there and then we have difficulty even getting them on our radar. How do we identify a mom-and-pop pharmacy that wants to relocate to our neighborhood? (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets official, October 1, 2009)

Chain stores, in fact, have recognized the potential of the inner city market in the recent years. Partially influenced by Michael Porter’s work on the competitive advantage of the inner city market (Porter 1995) as well as the recognition of the collective shopping power of low income populations, corporate or mainstream businesses start to show interest in the inner city’s minority neighborhood market. Doing business is no longer a moral action or the right thing to do, but instead is a trend to capture in the competitive new global economy (Peirce 1997). But in reality, the entry of corporate chain stores remains slow in Baltimore. In a Baltimore Business Journal article titled “Chain reaction: Once-snubbed city luring retail giants,” it highlighted that chain stores began seeing the economic
opportunities of the city as young professionals moved in and a critical mass of retail businesses have rejuvenated several shopping districts (Hyland 2003). Yet the chain stores have only returned to downtown and gentrified areas where consumer expenditure and safety can be relied on, or only return to some of the neighborhood districts where the criteria of their formula business can be met. After all, the chain stores are followers. They will not come until the market is successful. “They’re not looking to forge new paths,” said Bonnie Crockett, a former manager of Federal Hill (ibid.).

This is particularly evident in the competitive districts, that the idea of “anti-corporate” didn’t exist in the early phase of revitalization. It is part of the dynamic in the retail development. As a former manager in Federal Hill Main Street points out:

[I] think is a mistaken impression about economic revitalization. . . is everyone assumes you bring in a couple of anchor chains and everything will fill in in-between and that is absolutely not what happens. [The reality is] you just fill in all those little shops and then the anchor chains say well that’s a nice spot, we’ll go there. . .

She later adds:

It really is because chain stores, you know, they want a sure thing, which is why, in a weird way, it’s why Federal Hill doesn’t have any because by the time they were successful enough to attract chain stores, they didn’t want them anymore. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, April 12, 2010)

When the neighborhood commercial districts are successful with independent commerce, they want to preserve the independent nature and
characters of the neighborhood. Federal Hill, the recipient of a 2009 “Great American Main Street” award, has become a renowned story of success for the Main Street Approach among preservationists, as well as a known destination as "Hip Side of the Harbor" with distinctive shops for visitors. As a Main Street manager in another competitive district, Hampden, puts it:

There’s lots of people who would say [they’d] love to see a Gap in Hampden or Federal Hill, and I think that can be an additional draw. . . [But] one of the things Hampden is known for is its originality. We wouldn’t want to see Hampden turn into a mini mall. (Hyland 2003)

Even in the current economic climate, when the popular discourse is that chains like Starbucks are good for neighborhood businesses because they have capital to pay the rent and help the store to remain open, local merchants in Hampden see them more as a threat, attempting to take advantage of the area’s growing popularity. The owner of Café Hon, the magnet business of Hampden, asserted her objection to chains and said “we [merchants] would get together, and make it very uncomfortable for them to try to do something like that here.” (Voice of America 2008)

While anti-corporate sentiment increases in the competitive districts, chain stores are seen as signs of revitalization and diversity, as well as additional amenities (rather than threats) in transitional districts. Therefore, recruiting chains, especially those providing basic neighborhood services, is often one of the major tasks in terms of economic restructuring in the transitional or redevelopment districts. Waverly, a commercial district that has successfully recruited a Giant grocery store, ACE hardware store, BP gas station, along with
several new businesses opened or expanded since 2000. They described itself as “a true ‘Main Street’ with an interesting mix of local and national retailers, and attractive early 20th century mercantile buildings.” (Waverly Main Street 2011)

Belair-Edison, another transitional commercial district surrounded by an increasingly popular residential real estate market, portrays itself as community and family-oriented, where specialty and basic needs are both supplied. On their neighborhood website, the Main Street of Belair-Edison is described as:

Whatever you are looking for, chances are you can find it locally. Want to know where to find the best Jerk Chicken in the Northeast? A great florist? CVS? Find it right around the corner. (Belair-Edison Neighborhood Inc. 2010)

Being a local or a branch store is not so much a concern in the transitional districts, compared to competitive ones. Lacking a distinct or defined characteristic to match up to, anything is welcome here. To them, change, or gentrification, is about filling the vacancy. Business retention is also an important approach, since existing businesses are core to the transitional districts. When ethnic-oriented or marginal businesses occupying the majority of the commercial space, they are seen as assets rather than eyesores in the commercial corridors. For example, Belair-Edison markets the existing clusters of African American hair salons, often may be commercially marginal, as a local destination and a theme of their festival (Figure 17).

If you talk to some of the salon owners, they’ll tell you that once somebody finds somebody that can cut their hair the way they like it, they’ll stick with that person no matter where they go. So if you're a salon owner that started off in West Baltimore and you started building up your client list and then you moved here to Northeast Baltimore and Belair-
Edison, those original clients from West Baltimore will drive over here. . .
So I would say people traveling to and from work or people that are
visiting the salons are the ones that are coming from outside the
community. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February
4, 2010)

In redevelopment districts, it is the “redevelopment” theme that dominates
the discourse, whereas commercial revitalization is a complementary effort to
support that theme, whether it is a tourist designation or a bio-tech park. These
redevelopment themes often seemingly disconnected from the existing conditions
in the business districts; the economic restructuring component aims to fit to the
new image rather than the current business community. Sometimes it is easier
for them to dream about what this area could be rather than use the reality of
existing conditions. Therefore, it is harder to persuade the rest to keep their feet

Figure 17: A hair salon is marketed as “multicultural” in Belair-Edison.
on the ground, as a Main Street official points out:

    So we’re really working with the neighborhood to identify desired business and get them sort of realistically figuring out what those businesses can be. Because we still have people who are saying, “We’re going to get a Starbucks on Pennsylvania Avenue.” And I’m thinking, “One, no you’re not.” And two, “Like do you need a Starbucks?” Let’s look at what you really need.

He continues:

    The neighborhood sees Pigtown as a designation district but in reality, I think it is a neighborhood-serving district. (Interview with Baltimore Main Streets officials, October 1, 2009)

Remaining a low-income area, what these areas lack are basic neighborhood services like banks, pharmacies, and grocery stores. However, recruiting chains to these areas is especially difficult with the current demographic profile, high vacancy rate, and the perception of crime. Until a large-scale redevelopment project takes place to somehow transform the district, the retail scene remains static and the residents nearby remain underserved. Simply put, neither revitalization nor gentrification will occur until large-scale capital, whether it is state, private or both combined, transforms the scene of deterioration. The Main Street approach, in these particular cases, makes less difference than the traditional urban renewal projects that simply temporarily beautify the area, but do not fundamentally fix the structure or problem of the district.

    The aforementioned process of commercial revitalization in Baltimore neighborhoods echoes what Zukin and others (Zukin et al. 2009) have asserted regarding the change in neighborhood commerce in New York City. She reflects that the changing retail landscape in cities reflects the structural change in the
retail industry: disappearance of small mom-and-pop stores, chain-storization of necessity goods, and boutiques for niche marketing and customized goods for the needs of style-oriented residents and visitors who seek cultural distinction from the suburban malls. While the commercial scene in redevelopment neighborhoods is still occupied by low income neighborhood serving business, the lack of chains and boutiques makes these shopping places too marginal to attract middle income shoppers or visitors. At the other end of spectrum, the competitive neighborhoods, destination businesses dominate the retail landscape while neighborhood-serving business are declining or have disappeared from the scene. In between are the transitional neighborhoods, where residential demand is strong and provides a more diverse blend of chain and independent, neighborhood and destination business. It provides opportunity, time, and space for existing business retention and development, while recruiting businesses that balance the needs of diverse population.

Inclusion of Residents and Marginal Businesses

The concept of “Organization” in the Main Street Four Point Approach also incorporates the idea of inclusion in the process of commercial revitalization. The inclusion of the residential community makes the program distinct from other traditional commercial revitalization efforts that are often exclusively accessible to merchants and commercial property owners. As a result, the changes can be justified as being in the interest of community, rather than merchants alone.
Many existing old business took an alienated attitude toward Main Street at first because they think Main Street is another layer of bureaucracy imposed upon them. What Main Street tries to promote is the idea of including neighborhood small business as part of the neighborhood revitalization. Many existing inner-city neighborhood businesses mostly serve a low-income population. They are marginalized by the city, the business community, and also by the residents who live nearby. Residents think businesses are making money; therefore, they don’t deserve their volunteer time. But what some Main Street managers have tried to do through organization is to change this perception, and let these marginalized businesses feel that someone does care about them. “For the business owner, the ones that get it, yeah, the Main Street means something to them...That somebody cares.” (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, February 4, 2010) Especially in transitional neighborhoods without merchant associations, the idea of Organization is to help marginalized businesses organize as a political entity to address the issues of the district collectively.

As a result of suburbanization, commercial strips are no longer filled with “mom-and pop” stores or serve as the center of community that Jane Jacobs nostalgically described. After an era of disinvestment by mainstream capital, marginalized, low-income, and ethnic-oriented businesses such as pawn shops, fast food stores, hair salons, tax services, and storefront church began to fill in these empty commercial spaces. The space then becomes alienated from the more affluent middle-class residents nearby. To some extent, these residents feel a
sense of exclusion from this space. Main Street provides them a channel and
opportunity to participate, engage or reclaim the space to something they feel
familiar and comfortable. Therefore it represent a political strategy for inclusion,
whether it is an inclusion of small business to the city’s economic development
agenda, inclusion of business as part of the community, or inclusion of residents
to the commercial space.

However, that inclusion could be selective, depending on who has time to
participate, as well as the accountability of the neighborhood Main Street
manager. Design and promotion are usually two of the most popular committees
among the Main Street program in which volunteers like to participate in as they
are more tangible and easy to obtain a sense of accomplishment. In addition,
volunteers are more likely have an interest in making the area look better or
appear better to the media, but not necessarily to help businesses to do better.
Frequently, the closure of an existing business is seen as a personal factor, not an
economic factor. Particularly if the current stores are not supplying the needs of
current residents, they are more likely to see the upgrading, or gentrification, as a
positive trend rather than a threat to a merchant’s right to a commercial space.

Without volunteer resource, the level of help a merchant receives from
business development or retention often depends on the individual Main Street
manager. A full-time manager, fully funded by the city for the first year, is one of
the biggest differences of the Main Street program from its predecessors on
commercial revitalization. This human resources (rather than capital investment)
creates great flexibility for program implementation; at the same time, it results
in a great variation among neighborhoods, depending on managers’ preference, personality and the volunteer resources attached to the program. Beside some oversight from the city-wide program officials, managers often set the priorities for program implementation, whether physical improvements, business retention, or simply the survival of the program. Singer said in an interview that “a full-time manager ‘could recruit businesses to fill the empty spaces in the neighborhood, as well as devote time to fund-raising’” (Dash 2004).

Consequently, Main Street can provide an opportunity for inclusion, to encourage the participation of residents on the commercial centers that have been alienated from their life, whether as a customer or as a citizen of the community. It could become a vehicle to organize existing marginal business, to engage in the collective affairs of the district, or to present a political voice among the merchants. Yet Main Street also has the potential for exclusion, depending on the makeup of board members, volunteers and the preference of the Main Street managers. In competitive neighborhoods, commercial upgrading seems to be the dominant voice in change, as the area is gentrified and residents see commercial gentrification as a better fit for their residential communities. There is less concern about the results of gentrification, especially for those low-income serving business that disappeared in the first wave of gentrification. In redevelopment districts, Main Street is also more likely to take a pro-growth approach, since anything is welcome in a distressed area. The most controversial situation could happen in the transitional districts, where the capital is moving in and preferences of the residents and merchants might clash due to their economic status. The future of the district could be a result of market conditions
as well as the preferences of participants to maintain the economic and social diversity of the neighborhood commercial districts.

Main Streets “Open Up” Neighborhoods

In the real estate section of a local newspaper article, Morton (2005) describes the role of neighborhood associations in attracting new residents. By passing out welcome packages, festival events, dinner parties, and house tours to befriend newcomers, they make newcomers feel safe and comfortable when relocating to the neighborhood. It used to be that grandmothers looked after children from the front porch and neighbors watched out for each other on the front lawn, or social-ethnic-religious organizations helped newcomers to connect to the established network of the neighborhood. Yet these traditional “eyes on the streets” have become a bygone era after the decline of social ties following outmigration and the increase of two-jobs households. What attempted to replace it is the rise of the neighborhood organizations in keeping the communities safe and well-maintained. In Baltimore, where the overall city population is still declining, their tactics to promote growth seems to be essential and necessary. Not affiliated with class, ethnicity, or religion, these new neighborhood organizations help simplify the complexity of urban neighborhoods and make them accessible to newcomers, whether they are home-buyers or investors.

The neighborhood Main Street organizations are somehow similar in this regard. It is a new kind of neighborhood association in commercial space. By improving the storefronts and hosting promotional events, Main Street helps
create “curb appeal” to people of interest. By working with existing merchants, and recruiting residents and new businesses, Main Street neighborhood associations create an atmosphere that these places are good to participate and invest in. Main Street organizations are often located in a storefront or commercial property near the main commercial corridor, to make a physical presence on the street. Unlike the merchant association, the traditional social organization of the commercial street, Main Street is open to anyone, whether they are new to the neighborhood or to the decision making of the commercial realm. By creating welcome packages, helping identify potential properties, and seeking potential funding opportunities, the Main Street organizations help lower the entry barriers and make them feel welcome. Neighborhood Main Street organizations become the new “eyes” on the street in the commercial district (Figure 18-19).

For existing residents, Main Street provides a channel and opportunity to participate, engage or reclaim the space to something they feel familiar and comfortable. At the same time, they feel a sense of control to reclaim the space to where they want to shop. To new residents, the new stores and new façade improvements provide signs of improvement and positive change in these areas. Promotional events help introduce those changes to those of unfamiliar within the neighborhood and package the neighborhood to different audiences. The festivity of the events help signify a message that the area is fun and safe, and offer a sense of place that is often lacking in suburban areas. Borrowing from tourism literature, the design and promotion work like signs and signifiers in the
landscape of revitalization (MacCannell 1976). If new storefronts and streetscapes are signs of improvements and reinvestment, the festivals and media exposures then act as the signifiers to reinforce the idea of that revitalization is happening in the area. We all become consumers of the urban space, either by visiting or investing in neighborhoods. As consumption plays an important role in our everyday life, what we buy and the places we shop have become intertwined with the construction of our personal identities (Miller 1998). As the public spaces of the neighborhood, neighborhood commercial districts play a crucial role in defining a sense of place. They also define the consumption characteristics of the neighborhood and create a symbol of the neighborhood
Figure 18. The front entrance to Hamilton Main Street office. Neighborhood Main Street organizations often make them physically more accessible by putting up visible signage.

Figure 19. Highlandtown Main Street office. The organization is located in the Southeast Community Development Corporation Neighborhood Investment Center. The façade improvements on this corner commercial property creates curb appeal on the street.
If the traditional neighborhood commercial district promotion event aims to attract “shoppers,” the Main Street related events promote the place through themes and attract a greater audience. Even though some of the commercial districts are still in bad shape, the promotional events occurring on the commercial corridor generate a certain atmosphere that the area is friendly and ready for investment. For example, in Pigtown (Washington Village), where not many stores remain in the commercial strips, the event creates a certain festivity and a sense of resurgence. Whether that event is promoting the “historical theme”-- Pig Run, making the urban space fun and family friendly, or a “cultural theme” – Artdromeda, featuring art and dance throughout the emerging art scene, these temporary events do have lasting effects on the neighborhood. In a newspaper article describing a former suburban resident describes her decisions to relocate to Pigtown: “The festival was just a festival, [but] it pushed us to get a house in the neighborhood.” (Morton 2005). In the same article, the effect of promotional event on neighborhood redevelopment is found. “Five people who came to the festival or other events such as a golf tournament, urban hike or cocktail party, spent $1 million buying houses and renovating them.” (ibid.)

The same result happened in Hampden,¹⁰ where the popular event is “Hon Fest,” featuring a funky dress-up context that is a celebration of working women

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¹⁰ Hampden is currently an non-active Main Street neighborhood in uptown Baltimore. The designation was between 2000-2005. Hon fest is not a promotional event hosted by Main Streets, but the improvements works that came from Main Street during the 5 years of designation compliment the revitalization trend in the area.
in Baltimore. The event helps establish and expand the funky characteristics of the place, attracts locals and regional visitors to come to a former working-class neighborhood, and makes it a weekend destination outside of downtown Inner Harbor. It also helps promote neighborhood housing stock to women professionals. Through the events, as the director of the Hampden Chambers of Commerce described: "Women feel safe here. . . . That drives a housing demand." (Steinberg 2002) The specific atmosphere generated through this thematic event makes Hampden emerge as one of the most popular destinations in uptown Baltimore and the most competitive neighborhood for commercial as well as residential properties. The event and the restaurant help attract new stores to match this funky theme (Figure 20).

Main Street’s focus on promotion also helps draw public attention. As many Main Street managers describe, unless you are in commercial revitalization, people in general may not aware of the existence of the Main Street program. However, the focus on promotion and the media attention they drew help to get people’s attention to the place. As a former Federal Hill Main Street manager points out:

You can ask somebody and they might say I didn’t even know about Main Street, but then they’ll say but I’ve been hearing about Federal Hill for the last year; everybody is talking about it and all these things are going on and it’s a great place to come down on the weekends. You know, all of that, all of those good things happened and they were attracted to Federal Hill because of the work Main Street is doing. (Interview with neighborhood Main Street manager, April 12, 2010)
Main Street thus makes a place feel welcoming not just to shop but to spend your time and have fun. Such promotional strategies may have lasting effects on neighborhoods. If the traditional neighborhood commercial district’s promotion event is to attract “shoppers,” the Main Street related event is also to promote the “place,” and each event helps package the neighborhood to different audiences, whether they are residents, visitors, or potential home buyers.

Patch (2008) delineates two kinds of gentrification: residential gentrification and street gentrification. While residential gentrification describes the physical and demographic changes occurring in the private, domestic part of neighborhood space such as housing, street gentrification happens in the public or quasi-public domain of the neighborhood like parks, streets, sidewalks and commercial space. Often residential gentrification occurs in the first stage of the
neighborhood change, and street gentrification helps create public characters to attract newcomers and facilitate the pace of neighborhood change. What he meant by “public characters”, in his analysis in Williamsburg, are new female residents and the stores they open that generate a safe and welcome atmosphere for new comers to enter and to congregate. They help extend the gentrification process from the private domain to the public sphere and also create new public space for new female residents not only to explore but to feel sense of belonging in the neighborhood, which is very different from the traditional kinship or ethnic networks of the long-term female residents.

Here I would argue that neighborhood Main Street organizations, physical improvements and promotional events represent the new “public characters” (Patch 2008) of the commercial corridor as well as the neighborhood that change is “happening.” The organization itself and the activities it initiates, such as façade improvement, festivals, and new stores, all create a sense of “street gentrification” of the neighborhood commercial district. As the public space of the neighborhood, changes in neighborhood commercial space could facilitate the gentrification occurring in and beyond the domestic, residential space. By making these commercial spaces appealing, welcome and fun, these Main Street activities may have a combined effect to speed up neighborhood change.

Landscape of Vernacular or Landscape of Power

Zukin (1991) suggests that neighborhood shopping streets are important to constructing identity and difference. These neighborhood commercial districts
are also neighborhood public spaces where social networks are created and maintained. While downtown represents the landscape of power, neighborhood shopping streets remain the landscape of the vernacular for the domestic part of urban life, which are particularly important for those with less mobility. However, as neighborhood commercial districts become integrated as part of a local economic development strategy, they no longer simply serve the local population with neighborhood-based amenities and services. They become special districts for visitors and frontiers for neighborhood redevelopment to make the city more competitive. As a result, sometimes promotional events could mean more to visitors and newcomers than current residents. This is particularly evident in the redevelopment neighborhoods, where vacancy is high and attracting new investment becomes the key to revitalization. A resident complains about the event that seems to be disconnected to the neighborhood:

I don’t know if a lot of the residents go but I always see [the Pigtown Festival] covered on the local news and that sort of thing. It’s got it’s own audience and it’s very specific. It’s not one of these kind of events where... I mean the running with the pigs is pretty unique, I guess is what I’m trying to say.

She continues:

I’ll have lived there for eight years and I have people that live on my block that I have never spoken to and I don’t know how aware they are of [the Pigtown Festival]. They do do promotions and they have a Facebook page and they have... they do a lot of street level stuff, but in terms of getting the information out to the neighborhood, I don’t know how well they do that. (Interview with resident, May 17, 2010)

As of today, neighborhood commercial districts are increasingly becoming private space for consumers rather than public space for citizens. They could potentially
become another landscape of power that is being reshaped and represented to
market to the gentrifier’s desired product of an “urban village” (Zukin 2009)
rather than as part of a vernacular life of the city-dwellers. Neighborhoods are
not only defined by social-ethnic or economic status, but also, a choice of lifestyle.
As the public and quasi-public space of the neighborhood, the changes in the
commercial district and restructuring of commercial space take greater meanings
beyond commercial revitalization. As Deener (2007) asserted, neighborhood
commerce is the structure and symbol that shapes and reshapes the
characteristics of neighborhood life. Especially in the process of gentrification
and neighborhood change, neighborhood commercial streets may become the site
of conflict between old and new residents and businesses, and a contested ground
to construct the meaning of community.

The community does not always speak in the same voice. When Hampden, a
competitive commercial district, tried to protect its independent and funky
district atmosphere by proposing a no-chain rule since some merchants valued
the independent characteristics of the district. Residents, especially those with
less mobility like senior citizens, also see the benefits of chain stores to sell
everyday necessities. The director of neighborhood association responded in a
newspaper article:

“Not all businesses speak with the same voice, and not all residents
do. It’s interesting because we don’t necessarily want a big-box store in the
Rotunda, but the senior citizens, they wanted a Wal-Mart. Where can you
go in Hampden to get thread? To get socks? The neighborhood is changing
for the people coming in, but not for the people who have been living
here... I think we need stores that serve the neighborhood, not just
tourists.” (Sullivan 2005)
Yet Hampden’s characteristics have not been always so “funky”. It was a village center of a working class neighborhood with businesses that were primarily neighborhood-serving. The independent characteristic that new businesses and residents claim as authentic and try to preserve is fairly new. In Hampden’s anti-corporate proposal, that idea of community and authenticity is constructed. However, the discourse on what kind of commercial district this area should be is increasingly dominated by those newcomers, who see the neighborhood commerce as a symbol rather than service provision.

**Main Street as a Neoliberal Policy**

Despite the idea that public participation and grassroots involvement is the most popular planning and public strategy, relying on local voluntary organizations for economic development creates potential threats to intensify the current spatial inequality of resources and development. Fyfe and Milligan (2003) criticize that the uneven local geographies of voluntary activities are clearly important because they suggest that voluntarism may reinforce rather than alleviate social and spatial inequalities. Poor neighborhoods are less likely to have social and economic resources to operate a self-help approach for revitalization than moderate or higher-income neighborhoods. This is evident in the Baltimore Main Streets program, where the volunteer resources varied depending on the economic condition of the neighborhoods. People in more affluent areas are more likely to have time to volunteer than poor who fight for basic needs. As the results, the total volunteer hours contributed to Main Street activities are correlated with
Main Street typology, according to the statistic compiled in the program report (Figure 21). In the competitive neighborhoods, not only is the business association relatively strong, but volunteer resources are abundant and equipped with all kinds of professional skills. On the other end of the spectrum, redevelopment districts often rely on state intervention for change since merchants have little money to improve their physical appearance or to organize. Similarly, almost no residents have time to volunteer as they have to worry about basic needs. As a result, Main Streets in redevelopments districts have few volunteers and organizational resources except the neighborhood Main Street managers. Almost without volunteer resources attached, the role of Main Street manager in the redevelopment-oriented neighborhood is often to channel the city’s development priority to the neighborhood level as a passive participant. As the results, the ability to full program implementation in redevelopment neighborhoods is often compromised.

In transitional neighborhoods, where the existing business community is still vibrant and the market hasn’t taken over the course of change, Main Street program provides an opportunity to help the development of existing business and the community to organize. Several Main Street managers, in these types of neighborhoods, focus their efforts on business development. However, without actual financial resources attached to business development, the implementation is highly dependent on the preference of the manager. With the economic restructuring as the least attractive committee to attract volunteers, the manager
Figure 21. Volunteer hours by neighborhoods. Total volunteer hours from 2000-2004 on seven pilot Main Street neighborhoods, colored by Main Street typology. Source: Baltimore Main Streets Presentation 2004.

is the only resource attached to the development of existing marginal businesses. Whether they see the existing businesses as resources or as obstacle to revitalization will determine the direction of the commercial district. After all, Main Street is a place-based strategy that focuses on the place itself rather than the people in the district. The focus on façade improvements and promotion to those marginal businesses that target to low-income shoppers may not have the equivalent impact as those boutique stores that target middle-class consumers. The alienation between residents and businesses often casts the displacement of marginal businesses as a positive signs rather than a social issue of displacement (Zukin et al. 2009). How the closing of marginal business affects the well-being of owners’ families as well as the low-income population is a marginal subject even in the literature, which has not received much attention. However, these
neighborhoods also have the opportunity to maintain the diversity of the commercial districts by recruiting new business while helping existing business. That diversity is important to the transitional neighborhoods, since these commercial districts are often located at the borderlines of neighborhoods with a different income and ethnicity. How to ensure these spaces are accessible to all populations should be an important measurement for the long-term success of the program.

Conclusion

The Main Street approach to urban commercial district revitalization aims to be comprehensive through its Four-Point model, which includes “Design, Promotion, Economic Restructuring and Organization.” Featuring competitiveness, efficiency, economic development, public-private partnership, and participation of the third sector, the Baltimore Main Streets program is an example that highlights the opportunities and constraints of community development in the neoliberal context. It provides an opportunity to rebuild the commercial fabric of the neighborhood through economic development, but its implementation is deeply shaped by the socio-economic conditions of the neighborhoods.

Here, I classified eleven Baltimore Main Streets neighborhood shopping districts into three different types: competitive, transitional, and redevelopment. Competitive districts are neighborhood commercial districts with active business
associations and surrounded by residents of higher-socio-economic class and disposable income. Commercial areas are emerging as a regional destination, compared to a neighborhood serving shopping area. The Main Street model appears to be more effective in creating change, since business and property owners often have larger capital for façade improvements, and residents have more time and professional knowledge to volunteer. In transitional areas, which often have a more organized residential community compared to the commercial community, has a slower pace of implementing the Main Street strategy. Not only business owners often lack large capital but also the area suffers from relatively higher vacancy and the perception of crime. Therefore, commercial revitalization in these places is about filling the vacancy, finding the balance of neighborhood and destination businesses, and portraying the “safe” image of the area via promotional events. In the redevelopment areas, the Main Street strategy is part of the retail development strategy, in addition to other redevelopment projects that are occurring in the area. With the least financial and volunteer resources, physical improvements often rely on city-led large-scale project, not the incremental changes led by the individual business. Promotional events focus on the “historical past” of the districts rather than the existing commercial scene, since businesses are mainly serve a low-income neighborhood. Main Street organization is often a one-person organization without many volunteer resources as surrounding areas are the poorest and most disfranchised neighborhoods in the city.
Façade improvements and promotion, after all, are place-based strategies. To several neighborhood Main Street managers, the ultimate goal for physical improvements is to help the district as a whole, to make it cleaner, safer, and attractive to shoppers and new businesses. Yet, the audiences of these visual tactics are not limited to prospective shoppers. Collectively, they constitute a place-based strategy to promote the growth of the neighborhood. In terms of implementation of façade improvement grants, which is the “design” component occurs mostly at the beginning of designation, not only do different types of commercial districts experience different reactions from the merchants and property owners, but the impact also varies. As a reimbursement program, the ability to take advantage of façade improvement grants differs by the amount of capital neighborhood businesses or property owners have. So the effectiveness of the program implementation is highly shaped by the social and economic status of the neighborhood.

Without resources or emphasis on existing business, marginal businesses remain marginal. They will stay if the market does not take over the process of revitalization. Even if they survive, they must learn how to fit into the changing landscape of boutique oriented retail that seems to serve different clienteles. To Main Streets and to cities, how to maintain that diversity and make the commercial space equally accessible for different types of business and shoppers should be as important as doing a face-lift and recruiting businesses. As Deener (2007) pointed out, neighborhood commerce represents the symbol and
structure of neighborhood life, it can be easily taken over by a group of people in a higher-income status as the neighborhood gentrifies.

Main Street designation helps open up the commercial district to those beyond the merchants. The visibility of Main Street is not only for external consumption such as that fostered by politicians or chain stores, but also for local consumption and getting attention from residents, businesses, shoppers, and visitors to the commercial districts. To what extent the existing businesses benefit from physical improvements is unknown, but the hope is to generate attention from prospective shoppers, including residents, visitors as well as potential investors.
Chapter 5

Impact of the Main Street Approach to Commercial Revitalization on Neighborhood Real Estate Markets

The vitality of neighborhood commercial corridors is highly correlated with nearby residential communities. As Blair (1995) describes the relationship between the neighborhood conditions and the commercial districts: “There is a vicious circle between business development, housing and neighborhood change. As the population declines, businesses lose customers and are more likely to fail. As the neighborhood businesses close, the area will likely become less attractive for residents.” (ibid., 261) As residents moved out, the commercial corridor deteriorated as a result. In the meantime, the downturn of the commercial corridor caused further deterioration of the neighborhood. This is why cities and community-based organizations have begun focusing on neighborhood commercial revitalization as a tool for neighborhood revitalization beyond housing development. They believe that a healthy commercial district is essential for both community rebuilding and local economic development.

While numerous reports have attributed the Main Street program’s success to economic development, none of them has systematically measured the impact of Main Streets on urban neighborhoods from an analytical perspective. If being a
Main Street neighborhood is linked to a specific formula of success to commercial revitalization, I want to know if the program designation has any effect on overall neighborhood change. More generally, I hope to learn if the relationship between residential areas and the commercial districts holds true in the other direction, namely that the commercial revitalization also facilitates overall neighborhood revitalization.

Through earlier chapters I found that Main Streets have potential combined effects on opening up the neighborhood. This chapter I will take an empirical approach to measure the potential impact of Main Street designation on neighborhood real estate markets by looking at the property values and sale activities. First, I adopt simple descriptive statistics to examine the change in commercial property sale volume and sale price among properties with or without exposure to Main Street activities. I also examine whether the different types of Main Street neighborhoods described earlier share specific patterns of change in real estate market and activities. Second, a hedonic regression model is used to test whether there is a relationship between designation and property appreciation rate based on property assessment value and sale price, and to estimate the marginal effect of Main Street designation on property appreciation. Finally, this chapter is concluded by discussing the validity threats on design and analysis of this particular empirical study on the impact of Main Street designation on neighborhood changes at large.
Neighborhood Revitalization and Real Estate Market Activities

In this chapter, property values and sales activities are used to examine the impact of the Main Street Four-Point Approach to commercial revitalization on neighborhoods. In fact, real estate market activities such as property values and sale activities have long been an indicator to empirically measure the process or extent of neighborhood revitalization or gentrification. In early empirical research where residential revitalization was the focus, indicators for the housing market such as property renovation, sale prices, sale volume, or changes in tenure are often used to understand the dynamics of neighborhood revitalization and changes (DeGiovanni 1983; Baldassare 1984).

Measuring real estate activities and property values is not only because they are the commonly used empirical indicators for neighborhood revitalization, but also because of the evidence I found from the previous chapter. What makes the Main Street Approach different from other strategies for commercial revitalization is the idea of community organizing. As suggested by a former neighborhood Main Street manager, the concept of organization in the Four-Point model initiates an “inclusive” environment for participation from both residential and business communities. Unlike the Chamber of Commerce, which opens its membership to merchants only, the Main Street program tries to engage neighborhood stakeholders within and beyond the commercial districts. Many applications for Main Street designation were put together by a group of residents and business owners, as a former Baltimore Main Streets official
commented. Strong interest from the residential community toward a Main Street program may reflect what Knox (2005) suggested in the "slow city" movement, which is that sense of place has become a valuable commodity in the era of globalization through place marketing (Duncan & Duncan 2001; Knox 2005, 4). These Main Streets not only have symbolic meaning to the community but also carry potential utilitarian value in the local heritage industry and real estate market. The commitment from the residential community implies that the unit of analysis on the impact of Main Street designation should not be the commercial district alone. It is the neighborhood that initiates the formation; the evaluation should be taken on the same level. Therefore, the (potential) property value appreciation may have created an incentive for wider neighborhood participation.

Despite the fact that empirical research on the Main Street is scant, there has been a dramatic increase in empirical studies addressing the relationship between historic designation and neighborhood property value as a way to measure the impact of cultural/spatial policy on neighborhoods. In this group of literature, earlier studies simply use a different in difference method, which is to compare the average property assessment value between properties in historic districts and non-historic districts, in order to define the designation’s price effects (e.g., Scribner 1976; Benson and Klein 1988; Gale 1991). Recent studies (e.g., Schaeffer and Millerick 1991; Asabere and Huffman 1994a, 1994b; Clark and Herrin 1997; Leichenko, Coulson, and Listokin 2001) have advanced the method by employing the hedonic price method to identify the marginal effect of
historic designation on sale price, while controlling for other building and neighborhood factors (Noonan 2009). Further improvements have been made by Coloson and Lahr (2005), who replace the cross-sectional assessment value with a longitudinal assessment dataset, and use the annual appreciation rate as the independent variable to model the impact of designation. To capture the actual housing price, Noonan (2007, 2009) substitutes assessment value data with actual sale data recorded in the local Multiple Listing Service (MLS). Although the impact of designation is inconclusive from these studies, the data source and methodologies have been highly developed in this subject area. This trend reflects the popularity of historic preservation as a planning tool for urban revitalization and the demand for empirical evidences.

Unlike historic preservation, there are no land use or zoning restrictions associated with Main Street designation. However, both Main Street designation and historic designation are place-based strategies to attract reinvestment by providing financial incentives and adding cultural value to a particular area. Due to this similarity, lessons learned from the empirical studies of historic preservation on housing prices can provide a good foundation for this research. In addition, property value is a common measurement to evaluate the impact of planning intervention on neighborhoods, in the area of regulatory change (e.g. mixed use land use policy, historic preservation) and amenity provision (e.g. open space, public transit). The essence of Main Street designation is about amenity provision through the implementation of design (historic preservation and physical improvements), promotion (events), organization and economic
restructuring (service delivery). From these perspectives, property value proves to be one theoretically and empirically sound indicator to show the impact of Main Street designation.

Analyzing property values also offers several advantages from the viewpoint of data collection and data analysis. As suggested by Ellen and others (Ellen, Schwartz, and Voicu 2007) on the study of business improvement districts, property value data are sensitive, accessible and highly flexible since they “provide a comprehensive measure of neighborhood impact that can capture the benefits of a diverse set of improvements. In addition, property transaction is one of the few economic data in the public domain that does not aggregate based on specific administrative boundary. . .we can measure at individual parcel and know precisely which sales occur inside or outside of the districts.” (ibid.,15) The major benefit of using property values for impact analysis or evaluation is due to the characteristics of the property dataset itself. Property data have been recorded at the address level for a long period time, which makes it very versatile for spatial and temporal analysis. The spatial flexibility of property data is particularly useful for Main Street related analysis, since the boundaries of Main Street often do not match administrative boundaries, which is how most of socio-economic data are aggregated (Ozdil 2006). Plus, property value records are always available at city-wide or county wide level. This allows researchers to scale up or down to the desired area of analysis easily, and at the same time systematically compare the effect throughout the city.
As noted earlier, my research focuses on the relationship between commercial revitalization efforts and overall neighborhood change. In particular, my research question is about whether or not having the neighborhood commercial corridor designated as an official Main Street facilitates the process of neighborhood change through the lens of real estate activities. To answer this question, the relationship between Main Street designation on property sale and property value change in Baltimore City is examined. The following empirical analysis begins by comparing the difference between Main Street commercial properties and non-Main Street ones on the sales volume and value change, based on both sale price and assessment value. The second part of the analysis will employ a hedonic regression model to see if possessing Main Street designation or proximity to a Main Street district has marginal effects on the property appreciation rate of the neighborhood overall. In the regression analysis both commercial and residential properties are included in the observations to examine the overall neighborhood impact. In addition, both assessment value and actual sale price are examined to demonstrate how different instruments of measuring change may results in different conclusions.

Analysis I: Property Sale Volume and Value Change

To begin with, summary statistics of property sale volume and value change from the dataset are provided to see whether or not real estate activities in Main Street districts are different from others. In this section, only commercial
properties are examined since they are the primary type of land use in the traditional commercial district. To further narrow the comparable observations for Main Street commercial properties, I select all the medium-density commercial properties,\textsuperscript{11} which is the typical row-house style properties in the traditional commercial districts in Inner-city Baltimore. From here, three types of comparison groups are extracted: 1) non-Main Street properties, which are medium-density commercial properties located outside of Main Street designation boundaries; 2) Main Street properties based on the designation year; and 3) Main Street properties by the typology that I established in the last chapter. These subsets of Main Street properties, based on their designation year and typology, will allow us to get a first look at how the length of the program designation or characteristics of district results in different patterns of sale activities.

\textit{Data Descriptions}

The primary data source of this research is based on the Real Property Sale Database obtained from the Maryland Department of Taxation. This dataset is publicly available online by individual record, and also available at bulk by county from a private vendor, SpecPrint, in a flat file format. The dataset I collected includes all properties in Baltimore City that have at least one sale transaction record by the first quarter of 2009. From the perspective of property value, this

\textsuperscript{11} The selection was made by spatially joining the property dataset with GIS land use 2008 dataset available at Baltimore Enterprise GIS. The types of land use classifications we included in the “medium-density” including Medium Density Residential/Low Intensity Commercial, Medium Density Residential/Medium Intensity Commercial and Medium Intensity Commercial.
dataset is longitudinal, because it contains both assessment values on at least two assessment dates and up to three sale transaction records for each property. It allows us to compare changes in property sale and assessment value at the individual property level or sale volume, all aggregated by groups of geographic areas. For the sale price and volume, only 798 observations are included. These are properties that have at least one sale transaction occurring between 1996 and 2008. Since the program was first initiated in 2000, this time frame is to capture the sale activities that are potentially correlated with Main Street activities. For change in assessment value, there are 5,685 median-density commercial properties included in the observations.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{Main Streets vs. Non Main Streets Properties}

In terms of sale volume, commercial properties within Main Street districts experience slightly more property sale activity than do non-Main Street areas. Main Street commercial properties comprise 26.5\% of total medium-density commercial properties in the city, while 28\% of all medium-density commercial properties sold at least once between 1996 and 2008 were located within Main Street commercial districts. As for the percentage of commercial properties sold during this period, properties within Main Street areas are about one percent more likely to be sold than such properties in non-Main Street areas (Table 4).

\textsuperscript{12} The assessments are usually performed 3 years apart, but the assessment date (year) varies from neighborhoods to neighborhoods (See Appendix III)
However, there is not much difference if I compare the year-by-year sales trend within the 12 year, 1996 to 2008. Similar fluctuations were experienced between Main Street and non-Main Street properties, with the lowest volumes occurring in 1998, 2002, 2003 and 2008 and peaks in 1997, 2000, and between 2005 and 2007. The trend lines are almost identical regardless whether are examined, total counts or percentage of commercial properties sold. Neither do I see different sale patterns emerge after 2000, which is the year the Baltimore Main Streets program become active. Thus, from this perspective, it appears designation has no impact on sale volume. The slightly higher sale volumes suggest that Main Street properties may have been more desirable in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Property</th>
<th>Total number of properties (count)</th>
<th>Total number of properties (%)</th>
<th>Properties sold at least once between 96-08 (count)</th>
<th>Properties sold at least once between 96-08 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5686</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Main Street properties</td>
<td>4182</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street properties</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Hill</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fells Point</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampden</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton-Lauraville</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belair-Edison</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waverly</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlandtown</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redevelopment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigtown</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Monument</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania Avenue</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street 2000 properties</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street 2004 properties</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street 2006 properties</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street 2008 properties</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.
commercial real estate market since they have signaled that they want to revitalize. However, become a part of the Main Street program did not appear to generate extra sale activities between 2000 and 2008 (Figure 22).

![Figure 22. Sale volumes comparison between Main Street and Non-Main Street medium density commercial properties in Baltimore City, 1996-2008. Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.]

Although sale volume remains the same, being Main Street commercial properties did appear to yield extra value to a property. The average sale price of commercial properties in Main Street districts appreciated more than similar properties in non-Main Street areas. The gap between the average sale price per
square foot among Main Street and non-Main Street properties increased after 2000, although 2008 is an exception.\(^{13}\) (Figure 23) Similar results are found when comparing the percent change in assessment value. Main Street properties, on average, have increased about 14% between 2003 and 2008,\(^{14}\) while non-Main Street properties are only about 12% (Table 5). This could indicate that the designation itself, as well as the Main Street associated activities such as physical improvements and promotional activities, helped boost assessed values of the commercial properties.

![Average Commercial Properties Sale Price per Square Feet
Main Street vs. Non Main Street Areas](image)

Figure 23. Sales price comparison between Main Street and Non-Main Street medium density commercial properties in Baltimore City, 1996-2008. Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.

\(^{13}\) The substantial drop in 2008 could be due to the incorporation of two new Main Street neighborhoods in early 2008.

\(^{14}\) The assessment value is not a perfect indicator to capture the impact of Main Street designation, since the assessment dates are both after the year 2000. Another interpretation of this result could be that these properties were more desirable real properties in the first place, even before the Main Street designation.
Yet the picture is somewhat more complicated, especially when comparing the difference of these Main Street properties by their designation year and their typology. Among eleven Main Street neighborhoods, seven neighborhoods, which account for 45% of the all Main Street properties, were designated with a Main Street status in 2000. These neighborhoods include Belair-Edison, East Monument, Federal Hill, Hampden, Pennsylvania Avenue, Pigtown, and Waverly. Two other neighborhoods, Highlandtown and Fell's Point, were designated in 2004 and 2006 respectively, and account for another 41% of all Main Street properties.

### Table 5.
**Percent Change in Assessment Value**
**Medium Density Properties**
**Baltimore City, 2003-2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Designation Year</th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Residential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>2000 Federal Hill</td>
<td>11.19%</td>
<td>-0.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 Hampden</td>
<td>16.11%</td>
<td>23.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006 Fells Point</td>
<td>8.36%</td>
<td>4.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008 Hamilton-Lauraville</td>
<td>8.16%</td>
<td>20.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>2000 Belair-Edison</td>
<td>14.31%</td>
<td>20.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 Waverly</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>35.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004 Highlandtown</td>
<td>15.07%</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008 Brooklyn</td>
<td>7.71%</td>
<td>7.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redevelopment</td>
<td>2000 East Monument</td>
<td>35.42%</td>
<td>62.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 Pennsylvania Avenue</td>
<td>19.01%</td>
<td>14.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000 Pigtown</td>
<td>17.54%</td>
<td>42.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.

**Main Street Properties Breakdown by Designation Year**

Yet the picture is somewhat more complicated, especially when comparing the difference of these Main Street properties by their designation year and their typology. Among eleven Main Street neighborhoods, seven neighborhoods, which account for 45% of the all Main Street properties, were designated with a Main Street status in 2000. These neighborhoods include Belair-Edison, East Monument, Federal Hill, Hampden, Pennsylvania Avenue, Pigtown, and Waverly. Two other neighborhoods, Highlandtown and Fell’s Point, were designated in 2004 and 2006 respectively, and account for another 41% of all Main Street properties.
properties. The last 14% of the Main Street properties are located in two neighborhoods, Brooklyn and Hamilton-Laurelville, which were recently designated in 2008. To consider the impact of Main Street by the length of designation, I can use neighborhoods designated in 2008 as a baseline for comparison.

As for sale volume, no clear association between the length of Main Street designation and sale volume. It appears to depend upon the neighborhood commercial real estate market rather than Main Street designation. Similar results occur in terms of percent of sold commercial properties; there is no correlation between program history and sale volume. However, commercial properties in these neighborhoods seem to share similar sales patterns before 2000, but diverge afterward. This suggests that sales volume is not a good indicator of the impact of Main Street designation on the commercial real estate market. In terms of average sale price per square footage, Main Street properties designated earlier sold at a better price than properties designated in 2008. However, comparing the properties designated in 2000, 2004, and 2006, the length of designation does not have positive correlation with property sale price (Figure 24). Again, it seems to vary by neighborhood real estate market rather than Main Street designation. That there is no clear pattern emerging could be the result of variation in the types of commercial properties sold throughout the sale year. Even only medium-density commercial properties are included in the calculation, there are still great variations in terms of property size, physical condition and specific land use. The small population of sold properties in
Figure 24. Sale volume and price comparison among Main Street properties by designation in Baltimore City, 1996-2008. Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.
calculation could intensify these factors and result in large fluctuations on average price.

In regards to assessment value, the neighborhoods designated earlier (in 2000) have much a higher percentage change in assessment value than those designated later (Table 5). Using the neighborhood designated in 2008 as the baseline, it is clear that all the neighborhoods designated earlier have higher percentage change in assessment value. This might be evidence to support the hypothesis that Main Street commercial revitalization activities do have an impact on property value (Figure 25).

![Figure 25. Percent change of assessment value on medium-density properties in Main Street neighborhoods. Baltimore City. 2003-2008. Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.](image-url)
Main Street Properties Breakdown by Typology

Based on the qualitative analysis in the previous chapter, I break down all the Main Street districts into three groups: competitive, transitional, and redevelopment. Competitive areas have the least vacancy rates and are occupied by more high-end retail and restaurants. Business and property owners often have capital available to take advantage of Main Street resources, resulting in faster and larger-scale physical changes in these areas. Since competitive areas are, or are becoming, a destination district, promotional events often target city-wide audiences rather than local shoppers only. Transitional areas have higher vacancy rates than the competitive districts, but some strong business activities remain. They tend to contain a mix of lower-income marginal businesses, but with some destination businesses emerging, like restaurants. The pace of the physical transformation is slower in transitional areas due to the limited capital that business owners have. The purpose of promotional events is to promote local business while attempting to change the perception of the area as unsafe. Redevelopment districts have the highest vacancy rates of the three types of districts, and are occupied by mostly low-end, neighborhood-serving business. Most businesses have little capital for improvements, but intervention from the state provides some funding for large-scale physical changes through façade improvement, streetscape redesign, and property development. They often market themselves through a historical theme and highlight the importance of heritage or historic resources in the area, such as the historical building stocks and known landmarks.
Compared to share of stock, transitional districts have the highest sale volume in terms of percentage of property sold, with competitive areas next and the redevelopment districts trailing last (Figure 26). The result is similar even if properties designated in year 2000 are considered (Figure 27). Yet the yearly breakdown shows a different trend from the aggregated results. When comparing the yearly trend, these districts share similar trends before the city-wide Main Street program started, but diverge after 2000. Before 2003-2004, competitive districts scored the highest in terms of sale volume, but transitional and redevelopment districts have increased sale volume afterward.

Sale price reflects the economic conditions of the district so competitive areas rank the highest. It is worth noting that average sale prices in redevelopment areas surpass that of transitional districts beginning in 1999. The extent to which this trend is associated with the Main Street designation is unknown. But it is possible that the Main Street program, along or with other redevelopment activities, either helps improve the property value or induces speculation. Similar results are found if I exclude the length of designation as a factor by only examining the neighborhoods designated in 2000.

Another interesting pattern emerged when examining the change in assessment value. Percent change in assessment value presents itself highest among the redevelopment neighborhoods, with transitional neighborhoods coming second when the neighborhoods designated in 2008 are not taken into account (Table 5, Figure 25). As most properties were assessed and reassessed
Figure 26. Sale volume and price comparison among Main Street properties by typology. Baltimore City, 1996-2008. Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.
Figure 27. Sale volume and price comparison among Main Street properties designated in 2000. Baltimore City, 1996-2008. Source: Real Property Sale Database, Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation.
between 2003 and 2008, the change in assessment values captures patterns similar to sale price-- that commercial properties in redevelopment districts appreciated more than did properties in transitional districts. Interestingly, sales price changes seem to be greater than changes in assessment values for competitive districts. It is possible that the assessment values of properties in competitive districts were already high in 2003 and 2004; therefore, the percent change is not as obvious as other types of commercial districts during that period of time.

Conclusions from the Summary Statistics

Overall, above analysis reveals that Main Street properties have higher sale activities and sale values. Main Street districts have a higher percent of properties sold when compared to those in non-Main Street commercial areas. However, the program does not change the trajectory that existed prior 2000. It is possible that these Main Street districts were selected due to their competitiveness, suggesting that they were more popular in the real estate market in the first place. As for property value, Main Street commercial properties in general are associated with both higher value sale price and assessment value. The program seems to correlate with higher property appreciation in terms of assessment value, as change for average price increase slightly than it was before 2000. Also, percent change in assessment value among Main Street properties was also higher than for non-Main Street properties. It is possible that the physical improvements and
other activities made by the Main Street program have further increased the market value and assessment value of the commercial properties within the designated boundaries.

However, there is great variation among the Main Street properties themselves, in terms of their length of designation as well as their economic conditions. Half of the Main Street properties received their Main Street designation in 2000 while others were subsequently designated in different years over the following eight years. Neither clear association between the length of designation and sale activities nor any spikes in sale activities correlated with the designation years are seen. Neither do I find a positive correlation between the increase of sale price and length of designation. The only measurable result is that properties designated earlier in 2000 seem to have a more significant increase in assessment value (on average) than those designated later. Based on the Main Street typology, the sale volume is not strongly correlated with the market-competitiveness of different areas, and that the pattern varies from year to year. In terms of property value, change in sale price and assessment value is not linear with respect to the economic conditions of these districts. Competitive districts appreciate more from the perspective of actual average sale price than do the two other groups, but this is not true for assessment value. Appreciation of properties in redevelopment districts outperformed transitional districts in terms of sale price and assessment value. It is possible that large-scale projects or improvements initiated by the state have large ripple effects on the overall
property values in the redevelopment districts, as opposed to the small, incremental changes made in the transitional districts.

What I found in the above analysis is that the real estate market is embedded in the larger macro-economic trend occurring in the city, as well as in the fundamental structural differences of these neighborhoods. Main Street designation seems to have some effect on property value. Yet the results are inconclusive depending on how you aggregate the data, particularly on when or which properties are sold. To fully understand the impact of Main Street designation on property values, a regression analysis is adopted to understand the relationship between Main Street designation and other intervening factors.

**Analysis II: Hedonic Regression on Property Assessment Value and Sale Price**

In this section, I use hedonic regression to further understand the relationship between property value, Main Street designation, and other variables. The word "hedonic" refers to pleasure, which economists link to the perceived value each part a good or service has to someone (Chen 1994). Hedonic regression, in fact, is a multi-variate ordinary least square regression to model the relationship between a dependent variable (the value of a good or service) and many independent variables (components). The only difference is that hedonic regression is often used in economics to examine the relationship between property values and several bundles of variables, which include location attributes, neighborhood attributes, and structural attributes. It allows us to
determine the value of each attribute via regression analysis. To incorporate our variable of interest, the presence of a Main Street program, another bundle of “Main Street” attributes is added to measure the effects of this commercial revitalization program on property value. Regression not only help to model the correlation between the property value and Main Street designation, but also measure the marginal effect of designation on property value by holding other variables constant. Using a usual hedonic form, the model assumes that the equation for predicting property value change takes the form of:

\[
\ln(P) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_i + \beta_2 N_i + \beta_3 D_i + \beta_4 M_i + \epsilon
\]

Where
- \(P\) = Property value change
- \(S_i\) = Structural attributes
- \(N_i\) = Neighborhood attributes
- \(D_i\) = Distance attributes to amenities
- \(M_i\) = Main Street attributes
- \(\epsilon\) = Error term
- \(\beta_i\) = Parameters to be estimated

**Data Descriptions and Selection of Observations**

The primary data source on property value for this part of analysis is the same Real Property Sale Database. As described earlier, this dataset is longitudinal since it contains both assessment values on at least two assessment dates and up to three sale transaction records for each property. Thus it allows comparison of both changes in assessment value and change in actual sale price of individual properties. Besides the sale price and assessment information, this dataset has some information on the physical characteristics of the properties such as parcel (e.g. size, land use, zoning) as well as the structural attributes (e.g. building age, square footage, dwelling units size etc.). In addition to the property
database, several spatial datasets are collected from the U.S. Census, Baltimore City Enterprise GIS, and Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance to incorporate other neighborhood and location variables. Geographic information systems (GIS) was used to spatially match up property data with variables from other sources (See Appendix IV for data preparation.)

The comparison group is refined to examine the impact of the Main Street program via regression analysis. Only medium-density commercial properties and residential properties within or near the periphery of selected traditional shopping district (TSD) are included in the observations. The traditional shopping districts in this analysis include all eleven Main Street districts and seven other traditional shopping districts15 in the City of Baltimore. I used the current Main Street designation boundaries and old shopping districts boundaries to define which properties were “within” each district. Periphery areas as defined as follows: 1) For commercial properties, properties within a half mile of the aerial distance from the TSD boundaries are included as a proxy to an area within a 10 minute walking distance. Only medium-density commercial properties are included in the analysis for two reasons. It is a way to control for the great variation of commercial properties since many of the structural variables have been omitted in the property database during the data entry. Also, medium-density commercial properties often share similar physical characteristics to commercial properties in the traditional shopping districts. 2) Residential properties within a quarter mile aerial distance from the TSD

---

15 These old shopping district were selected based on a 1965 report (Hollander 1965) on the neighborhood shopping districts in Baltimore.
boundaries are defined as a 5-minute walking distance neighborhood to a TSD. Since some of the TSDs are located in the low-density single family neighborhood, all residential properties are included for this analysis. A lot-size variable is added in the regression model to take residential density into account.16 I begin the regression analysis using the assessed value to measure property value change. Based on the aforementioned parameters, a total of 3,485 commercial properties and 42,951 residential properties that have been assessed at least twice between 2000 and 200817 are included in the regression analysis on assessment value change. In the next section of analysis a similar regression analysis is performed based on a group of properties that have at least two sale transactions between 1996 and 2008, in order to capture the pre- and post- the Main Street designations. The observations data include 283 medium-density commercial properties and 4,205 residential properties. The number of observations in the sale price analysis is substantially smaller. Only “repeated sale” properties that sold at least twice between 1996 and 2008 are included. Below, I describe how I constructed the variables to represent the value change using assessment value.

16 The regression analysis was performed on a city-wide set of observations as well as different sizes of periphery areas (from a quarter mile to one mile). Similar results in terms of direction of impact and statistical significance on most of the independent variables were found, except that the model fitness (R square) changes slightly according to different sets of observations.

17 Not all the properties are being assessed and reassessed at same years. See Appendix III for details.
Data Preparation: Measuring Change

Property value change can be measured in different ways. At a basic level, it can be simply measured by the increase rate, which is the ratio of a later assessment value to an earlier assessment value of a property:

\[ as21\text{incr} = \left( \frac{\text{assess2 value}}{\text{assess1 value}} \right) \]

What complicates the situation is that not all the properties are being assessed at the same year and the intervals between two assessment years are not always identical among all the observations. In order to take these factors into account, I employ similar adjustment techniques as Kim and Lahr (2009) who normalized the property value by either consumer price index or local average value to avoid the concern about general inflation and real estate market cycles in different assessment year:

\[ as21\text{incrcp} = \left( \frac{\text{assess2 value}/\text{CPI2} - \text{assess1 value}/\text{CPI1}}{\text{assess1 value}/\text{CPI1}} \right) \]
\[ as21\text{incrgp} = \left( \frac{\text{assess2 value}/\text{local average2} - \text{assess1 value}/\text{local average1}}{\text{assess1 value}/\text{local average1}} \right) \]

Here, as21ratecp represents the CPI-adjusted total percent change in assessment value. First I adjusted all sale prices by the housing component of the local Consumer Price Index-All Urban Consumer (CPI-U) for Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area. CPI1 represents the CPI measure at the first assessment year whereas CPI2 represents the index value at the second assessment year. The second type of adjusted total percent change (as21rategp) uses a similar equation, except the assessment value is normalized by the local average assessment value
of a particular year. Since each city may experience different real estate dynamics that run counter cyclic to the metropolitan area of CPI-U, I deflate the assessment value by the mean of all properties assessed in Baltimore City by land use at the specific year.  

Kim and Lahr (2009) take a step and calculate the annualized appreciation rate rather than total appreciation rate to take account for the length of time between any pair of assessment years. It begins with the total appreciation rate and reduces it via an exponent that captures the number of years between assessments. The following equation represents the unadjusted increase rate and unadjusted annual appreciation rate:

\[
\text{as21incr} = \left( \frac{\text{assess2 value}}{\text{assess1 value}} \right) \\
\text{as21appr} = \left( \frac{\text{assess2 value}}{\text{assess1 value}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\text{assess year - assess1 year}}}
\]

Similar adjustment techniques again for the annual increase rate are employed, to take aforementioned temporal factors into account and to ensure that properties assessed at different point in time are comparable. The formula for adjusted annual increase rates is listed below:

\[
\text{as21apprcp} = \left( \frac{\text{assess2 value}/\text{CPI2}}{\text{assess1 value}/\text{CPI1}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\text{assess year - assess1 year}}} \\
\text{as21apprgp} = \left( \frac{\text{assess2 value}/\text{local average2}}{\text{assess1 value}/\text{local average1}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\text{assess year - assess1 year}}}
\]

Therefore, for each property record, six different variables are constructed to measure the change in property assessment value.

---

18 Only medium-density properties are included to calculate the local average assessment value for commercial properties.
Data Preparation: Predicting Changes

Using the usual hedonic form, our model assumes that a property value change is influenced by its structural attributes, neighborhood characteristics, distance to amenities and the Main Street intervention. To avoid multicollinearity, the correlation among all the variables of interest is examined before including in the regression model. If two independent variables are highly correlated\textsuperscript{19} with each other, only the one with a higher explanatory power with the dependent variables is kept.

Several variables are included to measure the potential impact of the Main Street program on property value in particular. Two distance variables are used to measure the effect of commercial revitalization within and beyond the Main Street boundaries. Variable “ndmainst1” measures the walking time of a Main Street property to the centroid of a neighborhood Main Street district. It measures whether or not a property is affected by being located in the center of commercial revitalization activity or at the periphery. To measure the spillover effect of a Main Street, another variable, “ndmainsto” is constructed to measure the walking distance of a non-Main Street property to the nearest neighborhood Main Street district boundary.\textsuperscript{20} In the Main street bundle of variables, several binary variables are incorporated to see whether or not the length of program implementation has different impacts on property value change (ms2000,

\textsuperscript{19} In this analysis, the cut-off point at 0.6 is adopted. It is a more rigorous than the conventional measure at 0.7 (Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch 2004). If the correlation coefficient of two independent variables is greater than 0.6, the one with higher explanatory power is included.

\textsuperscript{20} The variable “ndmainst1” is dropped in the final regression model on commercial properties due to the high correlation between ndmainst1 and ndmainsto.
ms2004, ms2006 and ms2008\textsuperscript{21}). The variable “olds” is another binary variable to represent properties located in TSDs without Main Street program assistance as the comparison group of observations. The model initially includes three binary variables on Main Street typology (e.g. competitive, transitional, development). Since these typologies are established based on neighborhood socio-economic conditions, they are dropped in the final model to avoid the multicollinearity with the neighborhood attributes. Summary statistics of variables regressed in our hedonic model are provided in Table 6 and Table 7.

Regression Model on Assessment Value Change

The baseline model uses only the structural attributes and ordinary least square (OLS) regression. Sequentially, bundles of attributes are added to the baseline model to observe that how each bundle explains property value change. Later robust regression is used on the same variables to diminish the effect of heteroscedasticity. The algorithm of robust regression help omits outliers and leverage observations (Kim and Lahr 2009). These steps are done repeatedly for all the different measurements of property value change introduced earlier, including total appreciation rate and the annualized appreciation rate of assessment value, in both normal and real forms. Table 8 compare the model fit among the unadjusted and adjusted annual increase rate using both robust regression, with OLS included in model 5 for the sake of comparison. Table 9

\textsuperscript{21} Properties designated in year 2008 are seen as another set of comparable group since the cutoff time of analysis is at 2008.
Table 6. Summary Descriptive Statistics, Medium-Density Commercial Properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
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</table>
compares the baseline model (model 1) to models that add each bundle (model 2-model 4). Similar model comparisons are also presented for residential properties in Table 10 and Table 11.

**Assessment Value Change on Medium-Density Commercial Properties**

In terms of the different measures used in the regression analysis, using overall appreciation rate (TAR) is better in our regression models explained than is the annual appreciation rate (AAR), at least for the commercial properties. The price adjustment techniques using the consumer price index (CPI-adjusted AAR) and local market average (local market adjusted AAR) in fact produce better results (Table 8). Even though $R^2$ varies from model to model, I do find that the direction of impact (signs on the coefficients) of the explanatory variables and their statistical significance are fairly robust across models. The results will be interpreted based on the local market adjusted annual appreciation rate (model 4) in the robust regression method (Table 8).

In the hedonic regression model, four bundles of variables are introduced to explain change in property assessed value: building, neighborhood, amenity, and Main Street. Comparing these four bundles of independent variables, the neighborhood and Main Street bundles explain the most variation in the model (about 9%). This means that Main Street designation status and a property’s neighborhood conditions are most important determinants of changes in assessment value and that on average structural characteristics and distance to
## Table 8.

Robust Regression for Medium-Density Commercial Properties within 1/2 miles of TSD

Based on Assessment Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>/Model 1/</th>
<th>/Model 2/</th>
<th>/Model 3/</th>
<th>/Model 4/</th>
<th>/Model 5/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAR</td>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>CPI-adjust</td>
<td>local market adjusted</td>
<td>local market adjusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>year of built</td>
<td>-0.006357*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.000233*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.002389*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.0002572*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.003791** (0.0022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base assessment</td>
<td>4.01e-09* (0.0408)</td>
<td>1.27e-09 (0.0604)</td>
<td>1.31e-09 (0.0616)</td>
<td>3.57e-10 (0.7953)</td>
<td>1.94e-08*** (0.0000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historic Properties</td>
<td>0.0150125*** (0.0001)</td>
<td>0.004222*** (0.0018)</td>
<td>0.0033936* (0.0157)</td>
<td>0.0011692 (0.6869)</td>
<td>-0.0086267 (0.2266)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>median income</td>
<td>-7.34e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-2.57e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-2.90e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-8.39e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-8.42e-07*** (0.0014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violent crime rate</td>
<td>0.000794** (0.0076)</td>
<td>0.001056 (0.2952)</td>
<td>0.0000804 (0.4422)</td>
<td>-0.0003524 (0.0855)</td>
<td>-0.0005038 (0.3429)</td>
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<tr>
<td>residential rehab</td>
<td>-0.0003747 (0.6695)</td>
<td>-0.000149 (0.6232)</td>
<td>-0.0002186 (0.4869)</td>
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<td>0.002312 (0.1477)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial vacancy</td>
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<td>-0.0012699*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.0013787*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.0025338*** (0.0000)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC dummy</td>
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<td>0.0263979** (0.0027)</td>
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<tr>
<td>in dist. to ms</td>
<td>0.00347 (0.2997)</td>
<td>0.0006801 (0.5225)</td>
<td>0.0010772 (0.3287)</td>
<td>0.0101899*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.002032 (0.9711)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln dist. to downtown</td>
<td>0.019375*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.006913*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>0.0123123 (0.0589)</td>
</tr>
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<td>old shopping dist.</td>
<td>-0.0198976*** (0.0002)</td>
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<td>2000 MS dummy</td>
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<td>2006 MS dummy</td>
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<td>-0.0096594 (0.1644)</td>
<td>0.0047587** (0.0083)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008 MS dummy</td>
<td>-0.0143286 (0.2217)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>0.448895*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.433992*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.4290219*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.740488** (0.0020)</td>
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</table>

| Observations       | 3485       | 3485       | 3485       | 3485       | 3485       |
| R-squared          | 0.1227     | 0.1224     | 0.1272     | 0.1395     | 0.0337     |

p-values in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance.
Table 9. 
Robust Regression Model Comparison 
for Medium-Density Commercial Properties within 1/2 miles of TSD 
Based on Assessment Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>model 1</th>
<th>model 2</th>
<th>model 3</th>
<th>model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
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<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
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<td>(0.7274)</td>
<td>(0.2218)</td>
<td>(0.7953)</td>
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<td>(0.0000)</td>
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<td>ln dist. to downtown</td>
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<td>R-squared</td>
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<td>0.0753</td>
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<td>0.1995</td>
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p-values in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance.
Table 10.
Robust Regression for All Residential Properties within 1/4 miles of TMD
Based on Assessment Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>/Model 1/</th>
<th>/Model 2/</th>
<th>/Model 3/</th>
<th>/Model 4/</th>
<th>/Model 5/</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAR</td>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>CPI-adjusted AAR</td>
<td>Local market adjusted AAR</td>
<td>local market adjusted AAR (OLS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>year of built</td>
<td>-.0004782*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-.0001735*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-.0001747*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-.0001528*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-.0000943*** (0.0001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>lot size</td>
<td>9.48e-05*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>2.86e-05*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>2.92e-05*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>3.59e-05*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>2.95e-05*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>base assessment</td>
<td>-5.34e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-1.57e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-1.54e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-1.40e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>4.86e-08*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>historic Properties</td>
<td>-0.900171*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.253755*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.257043*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.238687*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.2562413*** (0.0000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>median income</td>
<td>-1.58e-06*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-3.23e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-3.32e-07*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>violent crime rate</td>
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<td>-.0014176*** (0.0000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>residential rehab</td>
<td>0.021037*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>0.0046471*** (0.0000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>commercial vacancy</td>
<td>0.0136047*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0041051*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0040784*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0020175*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0021028*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>CDC dummy</td>
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<td>0.0033003*** (0.0000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>dist to ms</td>
<td>-.0022676*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>-.0007328*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-.0006302*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>dist within ms</td>
<td>-0.0107817*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>-0.0031812*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>dist. to downtown</td>
<td>0.0083292*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0034367*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0039958*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>0.0059335*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0027108*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0033992*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0042529*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0175001*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>0.0286922*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0302653*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0221341*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0520748*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>2004 MS dummy</td>
<td>0.0588766*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0238625*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>0.0116155*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>2006 MS dummy</td>
<td>-0.1987666*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>0.2954132*** (0.0000)</td>
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Observations 42951 42951 42951 42951 42951
R-squared 0.3817 0.3413 0.3390 0.2669 0.0391

p-values in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance.
Table 11.
Robust Regression Model Comparison
for All Residential Properties within 1/4 miles of TSD
Based on Assessment Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>model 1</th>
<th>model 2</th>
<th>model 3</th>
<th>model 4</th>
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<tr>
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<td>historic Properties</td>
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<td>commercial vacancy</td>
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<td>0.0034559***</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC dummy</td>
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<td>0.0049349***</td>
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<td>dist to ms</td>
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<td>-.0007201***</td>
<td>-.0007201***</td>
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<td>2008 M3 dummy</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
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<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.1560</td>
<td>0.1929</td>
<td>0.2142</td>
<td>0.2247</td>
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</table>

p-values in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance.
amenities have little inference, at least for medium-density commercial properties (Table 9).

To examine the impact of the Main Street program, I first turn to the Main Street bundle of variables. This includes the old shopping district dummy variable and the four Main Street dummy variables. Old shopping districts (our comparison group) on average experienced negative changes in assessment value during the study period, while properties located in the Main Streets experienced mixed results. Main Street designation was not consistently associated with positive change in assessment value. The year a district joined the program appears to make a difference, however. That is, being in 2000 and 2004 Main Street neighborhood districts had a positive influence on property value, but joining of Main Street later, in 2006 and 2008, is inconclusive. It is possible that Main Street activities take some time to affect property assessed values. On the other hand, my empirical evidence shows not all Main Street properties are competitive in terms of their change in assessed value to begin with. Rather, it is an indication that the length of association with the Main Street program does matter. In those areas where the Main Street program has been implemented for more than 5 years, not only is the impact positive, but also the effect size is positively correlated with the length of designation. By holding other variables constant, the magnitude of property value appreciation for properties designated in 2000 is, on average, about twice as high as for properties designated in 2004. Being affiliated with the Main Street program for a longer time undoubtedly means more financial resources, technical assistance, and media exposure. It also
takes time for commercial revitalization to yield impact, since physical appearance and neighborhood perceptions of shoppers or investors do not tend to change overnight. The patterns of property value change on commercial properties seems clearer using Main Street properties designated after 2006 and non-Main Street properties located in TSDs as the comparison group to those properties designated prior to 2004. These Main Street related intervention variables disclose a positive influence of Main Street program activities on property assessment value change once we take the length of time from program implementation into account.

Next, I examine distance to amenity variables to discover if proximity to targeted commercial revitalization areas, Main Streets and Downtown, yields any spill-over effect on property values. For medium-density commercial properties, proximity to a Main Street neighborhood commercial district contributes no discernable statistical increase on property values. In fact, the effect of the distance to a Main Street district, on average, is negatively associated with property value change (lnmainst0). For non-Main Street commercial properties, the closer one is to a Main Street district, the greater decrease on property value appreciation. A similar relationship is found when comparing a property’s driving distance to downtown Baltimore (lndowntn). Annual appreciation rate of commercial properties, regardless of a Main Street designation, tends to decrease with closer proximity to downtown. Either near downtown or Main Street, revitalization efforts appear to have no spill-over effect on the surrounding commercial properties.
All neighborhood attributes display anticipated signs in our model. Similar to what Kim and Lahr (2009) have found, properties in neighborhoods with higher median household income tend to appreciate less on average. Not surprisingly, a higher-than-average violent crime rate and higher-than-average commercial vacancy rate also yield a negative impact on property value. Interestingly, the amount of residential rehabilitation activity within a neighborhood does not have a conclusive effect upon the appreciation of a commercial property, having a neighborhood organization that promotes economic development or revitalization activities might do. Based on our CDC dummy variable, having umbrella community development organizations in the neighborhood tend to boost the appreciation rate of commercial property by 2%. This empirical evidence confirms the positive and strong relationship to what discussed earlier—that neighborhood associations signal that neighborhoods are open to change.

As for the influence of building characteristics on property annual increase rate, older commercial properties tended to have higher appreciation rate. Historical designation in general is a positive attribute for property value change, but its statistical significance varies depending on the dependent variables use to measure property value change. Similar results were found on the first assessment value of commercial properties, where overall higher-valued properties tend to appreciate more, but are only statistically conclusive in some of the models. In fact, this is the opposite of the equilibrating effect often seen in the
property appreciation, in which lower-value properties (on average) tend to appreciate more rapidly than higher ones (Kim and Lahr 2009).

Assessment Value Change on All Residential Properties

Overall, the model predicts the property value changes in residential properties better than it does for commercial properties. The amount of variation on the residential property value changes explained through the regression model is about twice as high as for the commercial one. Similar to earlier findings on the commercial properties, using the total appreciation rate (TAR) as the instrument of measuring change produced a better model fit than did the annual appreciation rate (AAR). In addition, the adjustment techniques on change rate by normalizing with consumer price index (CPI-adjusted AAR) or local market average (local market adjusted AAR) did not produce better results. While the local average normalized appreciation rate should be the best instrument to measure change among commercial properties, its credence seems to be discounted by its substantially lower R² (Table 10). I begin by interpreting the results, using the local market adjusted appreciation rate.

Compared to commercial properties, physical characteristics of a residential property explain much more of the variation in property value change. This particular group of variables contributes more than half of the R² in the model. Neighborhood characteristics are the next most important variables in predicting appreciation of residential properties, while Main Street variables play the least important role. Since Main Street is a commercial revitalization program, it is not
entirely surprising to see that Main Street variables are less important in the model estimates of residential property value change (Table 11).

Still, I begin by examining the Main Street, the intervention variables. Similar to commercial properties, a positive influence of Main Street program implementation is found for residential properties located within 2000 and 2004 Main Street neighborhoods. Although Main Street is a commercial revitalization program, the overall improvements of the commercial district have a positive impact on the properties located within the districts. The size of effect appears positively correlated with the existence of the program. However, the finding cannot be generalized to all Main Street program on properties since neighborhoods designated in 2006 and 2008 had no apparent affect at all. With the shorter history of program implementation, it is possible that the changes in residential property values within the commercial districts are determined by extraneous factors other than recently initiated Main Street program.

For “distance to amenities” variables, the proximity to downtown and Main Streets has a positive influence on residential property value change. Residential in Main Street districts that are within the walking distance to the centroid of the commercial district (lnmainst1), where the concentration of revitalization activities occurs, tend to have higher appreciation rates. The same goes for properties located outside of Main Street districts (lnmainst). By interpreting both Main Street designation year dummy variables with the distance to the center of Main Street variables, overall Main Street residential properties near the center of Main Street commercial districts have, on average, higher
appreciation rates than those further away. Those in districts revitalizing over a longer period are associated with even higher appreciation rates.

All neighborhood attributes display anticipated signs in the model, except the commercial vacancy rate. Residential properties in neighborhoods with a lower median household income are likely to appreciate more rapidly than those with higher ones. Residences in neighborhoods that are safer (with lower violent crime rates) and those that display more residential rehabilitation activity are more likely to have higher appreciation rate. Similar to commercial properties, umbrella community organizations in the neighborhood improve property value appreciation. Contrary to expectations is neighborhoods with higher commercial vacancy rate tend appreciate more.

Among building variables in the model, the appreciation of residential properties are positively correlated with age. This means that, on average, older buildings appreciated more than did newer buildings. However, having a historical designation is not necessarily a plus on property value change. On the other hand, residential properties designated as historic appreciate more slowly than those without. Residential properties with larger lots (lower residential density) are associated with higher appreciation rates.

Conclusions on Assessment Value Change

Based on the assessment data, I found that the Main Street program have a positive influence on both commercial and residential property appreciation. The
process is not immediate, however. Duration of the program existence does matter. For the seven pilot neighborhoods where Main Street model was first implemented for commercial revitalization in 2000, both commercial and residential properties appreciate in value more than do those other Main Street and non-Main Street properties in the TSDs. Properties in the Main Street program established in 2004 appear to yield some positive change in assessed value. Properties designated after 2006, however, do not show strong association. Interestingly, the effects of the programs are spatially confined. I find no spill-over effects of Main Street status on nearby commercial properties outside of the districts. On the other hand, a positive effect to housing (residential properties) within walking distance is found. A possible interpretation is that a revitalizing commercial district provides additional amenities to the surrounding neighborhoods and hence, boost the property value.

Regression Analysis based on Sale Price Change

In addition to the analysis on assessment value, I want to see the potential effect of Main Street status on property value change based on the actual sale price. The inclusion of this analysis serves two purposes. First is to compare how different instruments measuring property value change would result in different conclusions on the impact of the Main Street program on property value. Actual sale price, in theory, reflects the actual real estate market conditions rather than the assessment value. Second, the property assessment values were the “post” measurements of property value change since all the properties recorded in the
database are first assessed and reassessed after 2000. Since the initiation of the Main Street program was in 2000, it is possible that what being captured here simply represents the trajectory of neighborhood real estate trends prior to the program intervention. Therefore, I perform a similar regression analysis based on a group of properties that have at least two sale transactions between 1996 and 2008 to capture the pre and post conditions of the Main Street program. Our observations include 283 medium-density commercial properties and 4205 residential properties. The size of observations in the sale price analysis is substantially smaller since I only select “repeated sale” properties, which are properties sold at least twice between 1996 and 2008. Sales transactions four years prior to the Main Street program initiation in 2000 are excluded to avoid the possible noise on value change that is extraneous to commercial revitalization. In terms of measuring the sale price change, similar adjustment techniques are used to the assessment value analysis and construct six unadjusted and adjusted measurements to measure change. See detailed descriptions on repeatedly-sold property data preparation and summary statistics in Appendix V and VI.

*Interpretation of Results*

Overall the regression functional form does not model the change in actual sale price as well as it does for the assessment value for commercial and residential properties. Many of the independent variables turn out to be too statistically insignificant to predict the direction and scale of impact on property sale value change. The amount of variation (R²) on property value change that
can be explained by the model is also reduced. Neither do I see the CPI or local market adjusted measurements on property value change produce a better overall model fitness. The statistical significance of the variables is varied across different models. The following interpretation of results is based on the robust regression model using unadjusted annual appreciation rate (Table 12-15).

The results for the repeatedly-sold property model regarding the interactive effect between Main Street designation and commercial property value change is substantially different from the assessment value model. Among all repeatedly-sold commercial properties, Main Street commercial properties are on average associated with lower appreciation rates on sale price, especially for those designated after 2004. On the contrary, non-Main Street commercial properties that are closer to a Main Street district appear to appreciate more on average. Yet similar to the assessment model, property also tends to appreciate more in lower-income neighborhoods. Properties with higher sale prices to begin with also show positive correlation on the property appreciation rate. However, I cannot statically conclude the influence of the rest of the variables in the regression model on property value change.

As for residential properties, the amounts of variations on property sale price change that can be explained by the model have been reduced to a large extent, compared to the assessment model. Meanwhile, all of the Main Street variables turn out to be statistically insignificant in explaining the change on sale price. Most of the coefficients of buildings and neighborhood variables show the opposite direction of impact from the assessment model. Based on this model, a
### Table 12.
Robust Regression for Realestate-Sold Medium-Density Commercial Properties
within 1/2 miles of TSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>/Model 1/</th>
<th>/Model 2/</th>
<th>/Model 3/</th>
<th>/Model 4/</th>
<th>/Model 5/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAR</td>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>CPI-adj AAR</td>
<td>Local market adjusted AAR</td>
<td>Local market adjusted AAR (OLD)</td>
</tr>
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<td>6.98e-08*</td>
<td>5.19e-08</td>
<td>9.34e-08</td>
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<td>(0.0351)</td>
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<td>(0.8060)</td>
<td>(0.8207)</td>
<td>(0.9628)</td>
<td>(0.7733)</td>
</tr>
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<td>in dist. to ms</td>
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<td>-0.0621983**</td>
<td>-0.0588671*</td>
<td>-0.236427</td>
<td>-0.439097</td>
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<td>(0.0127)</td>
<td>(0.3554)</td>
<td>(0.2320)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in dist. to downtown</td>
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<td>(0.6653)</td>
<td>(0.6966)</td>
<td>(0.7173)</td>
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<td>old shopping dist.</td>
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<td>-1.119528</td>
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<td>(0.1016)</td>
<td>(0.1237)</td>
<td>(0.8878)</td>
<td>(0.8449)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 MS dummy</td>
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<td>(0.0031)</td>
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<td>(0.1903)</td>
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<td>-1.511526*</td>
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<td>(0.4438)</td>
<td>(0.5057)</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Observations: 283

p-values in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Table 13.
Robust Regression Model Comparison
for Realest-Sold Medium-Density Commercial Properties
within 1/2 miles of TSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>model 1</th>
<th>model 2</th>
<th>model 3</th>
<th>model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>year of built</td>
<td>-.0003627</td>
<td>.0001684</td>
<td>-.00003</td>
<td>-.0002262</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.4829)</td>
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<td>(0.9534)</td>
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<td>first sale price</td>
<td>8.11e-08*</td>
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<td>7.81e-08*</td>
<td>7.15e-08*</td>
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<td>(0.0128)</td>
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<td>(0.0175)</td>
<td>(0.0392)</td>
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<td>(0.2242)</td>
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<td>(0.5293)</td>
<td>(0.8060)</td>
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<tr>
<td>median income</td>
<td>-1.55e-06</td>
<td>-1.99e-06*</td>
<td>-2.66e-06*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.1043)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.0022641</td>
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<td>(0.0021)</td>
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<td>(0.8439)</td>
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<td>(0.4248)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln dist. to ms</td>
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<td>-.0621983**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.2715)</td>
<td>(0.0091)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln dist. to downtown</td>
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<td>-.0116256</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.2753)</td>
<td>(0.6653)</td>
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<tr>
<td>old shopping dist.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.1893)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000 MS dummy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1016)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2004 MS dummy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-.2542992**</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2006 MS dummy</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2008 MS dummy</td>
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<td>(0.7940)</td>
<td>(0.7850)</td>
<td>(0.4138)</td>
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</table>

Observations 283
R-squared 0.0327 0.1918 0.0795 0.1091

p-values in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Table 14.
Robust Regression for Recently-Sold Residential Properties
within 1/4 miles of TSD

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>/Model 1/</th>
<th>/Model 2/</th>
<th>/Model 3/</th>
<th>/Model 4/</th>
<th>/Model 5/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TAR</td>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>CPI-adjusted AAR</td>
<td>Local market adjusted AAR</td>
<td>Local market adjusted AAR (OLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>year of built</td>
<td>-0.011472** (0.0009)</td>
<td>-0.00293** (0.0040)</td>
<td>-0.002905** (0.0041)</td>
<td>-0.002963** (0.0028)</td>
<td>-0.0011033*** (0.0000)</td>
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<td>lot size</td>
<td>-0.002706** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-3.76e-06* (0.0120)</td>
<td>-3.30e-06* (0.0264)</td>
<td>-2.54e-06* (0.0811)</td>
<td>-6.85e-06* (0.0281)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.52e-06** (0.0000)</td>
<td>2.19e-07** (0.0000)</td>
<td>1.99e-07** (0.0000)</td>
<td>1.64e-07** (0.0000)</td>
<td>2.07e-07** (0.0000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historic Properties</td>
<td>0.0779326** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0247551** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0257157*** (0.0003)</td>
<td>0.0266544*** (0.0001)</td>
<td>0.0201431 (0.1786)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>median income</td>
<td>-6.45e-06*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-1.80e-06*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-1.74e-06*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-1.76e-06*** (0.0000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>violent crime rate</td>
<td>0.0045428* (0.0152)</td>
<td>0.002531*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0021412*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.0023995*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>0.002344* (0.0419)</td>
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<tr>
<td>residential rehab</td>
<td>-0.011803* (0.0391)</td>
<td>-0.0049385*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>-0.0045868*** (0.0015)</td>
<td>-0.0047296*** (0.0008)</td>
<td>-0.0103635*** (0.0006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>commercial vacancy</td>
<td>0.0015163 (0.6685)</td>
<td>0.0012786 (0.2206)</td>
<td>0.0014001 (0.1771)</td>
<td>0.0023234* (0.0223)</td>
<td>0.0077105*** (0.0004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.069559* (0.0277)</td>
<td>-0.0204856* (0.0115)</td>
<td>-0.019464* (0.0133)</td>
<td>-0.0181508* (0.0191)</td>
<td>0.0002357 (0.9889)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ln dist. to ms</td>
<td>0.012671 (0.2377)</td>
<td>-0.0081379 (0.0907)</td>
<td>-0.0071732 (0.1335)</td>
<td>-0.0058689 (0.2103)</td>
<td>0.0037125 (0.7117)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln dist. to downtown</td>
<td>0.082781*** (0.0010)</td>
<td>0.0144861* (0.0498)</td>
<td>-0.0081247 (0.0824)</td>
<td>-0.0079823 (0.2669)</td>
<td>0.015944 (0.4525)</td>
</tr>
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<td>old shopping dist.</td>
<td>-0.129973 (0.0605)</td>
<td>-0.0215167 (0.2918)</td>
<td>-0.0219204 (0.2802)</td>
<td>-0.0204807 (0.3027)</td>
<td>-0.06418 (0.1563)</td>
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<td>0.080976 (0.0890)</td>
<td>-0.0065935 (0.6375)</td>
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<td>-0.000342 (0.0997)</td>
<td>0.0199099 (0.5161)</td>
<td>0.0135415 (0.5213)</td>
<td>-0.0043639 (0.8838)</td>
<td>0.034501 (0.6013)</td>
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<td>2006 MS dummy</td>
<td>0.1321386** (0.0045)</td>
<td>0.0232671 (0.0898)</td>
<td>0.0255583 (0.0605)</td>
<td>0.0237807 (0.0747)</td>
<td>0.0647874* (0.0236)</td>
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<td>2008 MS dummy</td>
<td>0.0239734 (0.8771)</td>
<td>0.0091325 (0.8416)</td>
<td>0.0071295 (0.8753)</td>
<td>0.0014773 (0.9735)</td>
<td>-0.0375147 (0.6943)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.691865*** (0.0000)</td>
<td>7.330532*** (0.0002)</td>
<td>6.921385*** (0.0004)</td>
<td>6.554072*** (0.0006)</td>
<td>2.365241*** (0.0000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 5070  5070  5070  5070  5070  5070
R-squared: 0.0990  0.0534  0.0503  0.0501  0.0396

p-values in parentheses
* p<0.05,  ** p<0.01,  *** p<0.001
Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
Table 15.
Robust Regression Model Comparison
for Recently-Sold Residential Properties
within 1/4 miles of TSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>model 1</th>
<th>model 2</th>
<th>model 3</th>
<th>model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>year of built</td>
<td>-0.0001342</td>
<td>-0.0003414***</td>
<td>-0.000317**</td>
<td>-0.000293**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.1795)</td>
<td>(0.0006)</td>
<td>(0.0016)</td>
<td>(0.0040)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lot size</td>
<td>-6.10e-06***</td>
<td>-4.11e-06**</td>
<td>-3.62e-06*</td>
<td>-3.76e-06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0033)</td>
<td>(0.0139)</td>
<td>(0.0120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first sale price</td>
<td>7.42e-08***</td>
<td>2.02e-07***</td>
<td>2.19e-07***</td>
<td>2.19e-07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0005)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historic Properties</td>
<td>0.0124031</td>
<td>0.0299092***</td>
<td>0.0223572***</td>
<td>0.0247552***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0564)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0009)</td>
<td>(0.0006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>median income</td>
<td>-1.97e-06***</td>
<td>-1.79e-06***</td>
<td>-1.80e-06***</td>
<td>-1.80e-06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violent crime rate</td>
<td>0.002383***</td>
<td>0.0023577***</td>
<td>0.002533***</td>
<td>0.002533***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>residential rehab</td>
<td>-0.0054129***</td>
<td>-0.0039754**</td>
<td>-0.0049385***</td>
<td>-0.0049385***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0001)</td>
<td>(0.0047)</td>
<td>(0.0007)</td>
<td>(0.0007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial vacancy</td>
<td>0.0000859</td>
<td>0.0010458</td>
<td>0.0012786</td>
<td>0.0012786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.9318)</td>
<td>(0.3081)</td>
<td>(0.2206)</td>
<td>(0.2206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC dummy</td>
<td>-0.0035297</td>
<td>-0.0136736</td>
<td>-0.0204856*</td>
<td>-0.0204856*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.5979)</td>
<td>(0.0682)</td>
<td>(0.0115)</td>
<td>(0.0115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln dist. to ms</td>
<td>-0.0109334***</td>
<td>-0.0081379</td>
<td>-0.0081379</td>
<td>-0.0081379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0907)</td>
<td>(0.0907)</td>
<td>(0.0907)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln dist. to downtown</td>
<td>0.0154293*</td>
<td>0.0144661*</td>
<td>0.0144661*</td>
<td>0.0144661*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0327)</td>
<td>(0.0498)</td>
<td>(0.0498)</td>
<td>(0.0498)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old shopping dist.</td>
<td>-0.0215167</td>
<td>0.02918</td>
<td>0.02918</td>
<td>0.02918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.9918)</td>
<td>(0.0907)</td>
<td>(0.0907)</td>
<td>(0.0907)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 MS dummy</td>
<td>-0.0065935</td>
<td>0.06375</td>
<td>0.06375</td>
<td>0.06375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.8375)</td>
<td>(0.5161)</td>
<td>(0.5161)</td>
<td>(0.5161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 MS dummy</td>
<td>0.0199095</td>
<td>0.0232671</td>
<td>0.0232671</td>
<td>0.0232671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.5096)</td>
<td>(0.0896)</td>
<td>(0.0896)</td>
<td>(0.0896)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 MS dummy</td>
<td>0.0091325</td>
<td>0.08416</td>
<td>0.08416</td>
<td>0.08416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.8416)</td>
<td>(0.0896)</td>
<td>(0.0896)</td>
<td>(0.0896)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.4268322*</td>
<td>0.8381977***</td>
<td>0.7781224***</td>
<td>0.7330532***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0263)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0001)</td>
<td>(0.0002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 5070, 5070, 5070, 5070
R-squared: 0.0129, 0.0489, 0.0526, 0.0534

p-values in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Data Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Enterprise GIS, US Census 2000, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
historic property that begins with a higher sale price in a smaller lot in a less safe neighborhood, on average tends to appreciate more on the sale price. Being located in a neighborhood with more residential rehabilitation activities or an umbrella neighborhood association, contrary to the assessment model, has a negative impact on sale price appreciation. The building age and median income are the only two variables that show consistent influence on both sale price and assessment value change. Older buildings appreciate more than newer residential structures. Housing on average has a higher appreciation rate in a lower-income area than in a higher income neighborhood.

**Discussion on Hedonic Regression Analysis**

The focus of this analysis is not so much about modeling the property value itself, but rather how the value has changed by association with the Main Street program intervention during a specific period of time. Based on the past empirical research on the impact of historic preservation on property value, here I use both assessment value and sale value to measure “change”. There are no consistent findings to conclude the impact of Main Street status on property value change based on regression analysis on the assessment and sale price appreciation. While the assessment model shows the positive influence of Main Street program activities on property value, the results on the sale price model results are mixed. The difference of the coefficients between our assessment models and repeatedly-sold models points out how different instruments to
measure “property value change” can result in different conclusions on the impact of Main Street designation on property value.

Using either assessment value or sale price as instruments for measuring change has advantages and disadvantages. Overall, the regression model based on actual sale price does not either statistically support our previous findings from the assessment model or show an opposite direction on explaining the impact on property value. With a small pool of observations, especially among commercial properties, the sale price model is not robust enough to statistically conclude the impact of Main Street status since there not many properties have been repeatedly sold during the past twelve years. In theory, the sale price reflects actual market dynamics better than the assessment value but the sale records database might have been error-ridden to begin with. During the data cleaning process, I found several data entry errors or omissions in the Maryland Real Property Database. Other research using the same database also found that some of the fields are not reliable, based on conversation with city officials (Lewis, Boswell and Knaap 2009). In addition, self-selection could be another issue that causes the magnitude of coefficient difference between the assessment and sale price model. The observations included in the model, which are properties sold at least twice between 1996 and 2008, may be fundamentally different from the rest of the property population since not all properties will be put on sale as frequently as our observations. Sale price has the advantages of being the actual sale value that captures the real estate market dynamic, but the sale record can be a tricky data source since the transition value could be a biased measurement
that under-represents the actual market value due to personal or policy reasons.\textsuperscript{22} These errors could introduce a lot of noise in the regression analysis, especially when the sample size is small.

Assessment value, on the other hand, seems to be more reliable in predicting change since all properties are being assessed and reassessed at some point in time. However, the assessment value is not the actual market value of a property. Because it is calculated for the tax levy purpose, therefore it could be subject to bias as a proxy to actual market value. During our data preparation, I found the later assessment value is simply the duplicate of the first assessment value in some neighborhoods, while others have changed substantially. This could be the reason why the either the CPI-adjusted or local-market adjusted techniques do not construct a better variable in modeling the property value change, because assessment value is not always subject to the market conditions. Deflating the total appreciation rate to the annualized appreciation rate over the entire period between the first and second assessment values may not even be a proper technique, since the a longer period of time between two assessments does not always result in a higher increase on assessment value. These data and measurement issues could be the possible explanations for why the regression results from the sale price are so different from the assessment value.

\textsuperscript{22} Property could be sold at much lower price than its market value. For instance, a father could sell property to his child at a much lower price. City government could sell the property at a $1 amount, as an incentive for neighborhood rehabilitation or reinvestment. The sale price database simply records the price sold at a specific transaction. There are still many exceptions where they don’t reflect the actual real estate market conditions.
Validity Threats

In the following section, some potential issues with the quantitative analysis on the effect of Main Street status on property value and generalization are laid out using Shadish and others’ (2001) discussion on types of validity and threats to each validity.

There are four types of validities: statistical conclusion validity; internal validity; construct validity; and external validity. The first two types of validity concern the causal relationship between the treatment and outcome, which in our case is whether or not the Main Street Approach to commercial revitalization has effects on neighborhood property values. Both construct validity and external validity are concerned about generalization. External validity is concerned about if one can generalize the results for future designated Main Street neighborhoods in Baltimore or other urban Main Street programs in the United States. Construct validity is concerned about inferences of sampling and measurements particular to the higher order construct. In our case, it is whether the inference of the rise of property value in relation to neighborhood revitalization or gentrification is valid.

Internal validity refers to whether the causal inference stands. In our case, it is about whether or not Main Street designation (A) causes higher appreciation rates (B) based on the actual sale price or assessment value. Yet such a causal inference must be supported by three properties: 1)A preceded B in time, 2)that A covaries with B, and 3)that no other explanations for the relationship are plausible (no rival variables) (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2001, 53). In the assessment model, a positive correlation between Main Street designations on
property appreciation rates for properties with a longer program history. However, without having assessed values prior to program designation to compare, the higher appreciation rate among these properties could just reflect the trajectory of neighborhood real estate market trends. What have been proven statistically in the assessment regression model is simply the covariation between higher appreciation rates and Main Street properties designated in 2000 and 2004. It does not prove the causation.

The threat to construct validity for this research in particular is the connection between property appreciation and neighborhood revitalization, or gentrification. Despite the fact that property value has been used extensively in this type of empirical research, property sale activity only represents one type of operational instruments to measure the effect of policy intervention on urban revitalization in general. In fact, there are other better measurements to measure revitalization in commercial districts. For instance, measuring vacancy, exit rate, or the change in number or types of business establishments over time might be a better measurement. Our empirical research on the impact of Main Street designation is constrained by the available non-aggregated data to better connect the empirical operations to a larger phenomenon. At the same time, there are a very limited number of theories available to explain the larger effect of commercial revitalization on neighborhood change in general to help construct the operations.
Conclusions

This chapter sale volume and property value are examined to evaluate the potential impacts of Main Street program on neighborhood real estate markets. Overall, I found Main Street program have no impact on sale volumes. Main Street districts, on average, have higher sale activities than non-Main Street commercial areas both pre-and post-designation. Therefore higher sale activity simply reflects the trajectory of neighborhood real estate markets, regardless of the program existence. Main Street program, on the other hand, does have positive influence on both commercial and residential property assessed values. Based on the regression analysis on the assessment data, I found properties within Main Street designation boundaries, on average, have higher property appreciation rates. The results can be interpreted as the effect of Main Street program on property values. The process is not immediate, however. Duration of the program existence does matter. For the seven pilot neighborhoods where Main Street model was first implemented for commercial revitalization in 2000, both commercial and residential properties appreciate in value more than do those other Main Street and non-Main Street properties in the traditional shopping areas. The effects of the programs are spatially confined, but only on residential properties. A positive effect to residential properties within walking distance do yield higher appreciation rates on average due to the proximity to the revitalized commercial districts. I find no spill-over effects of Main Street status on nearby commercial properties outside of the districts. Yet similar conclusions are not found in the models using actual sale price as the measurement. I found
the effect of Main Street program is inconclusive, especially on those properties associated with longer program history. This suggests how different instruments to measure “property value change” can result in different conclusions on the impact of Main Street designation on property value. In addition, the threat on internal validity further limits our ability to conclude the findings from the assessment model.
Chapter 6

Conclusions

In the context of globalization and urban restructuring, local governments try to make their city competitive not only in the downtown area, but also to reach out to the neighborhoods by revitalizing those commercial cores. Renewed attention to neighborhood commercial revitalization represents a holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization beyond housing efforts; at the same time it symbolizes the recognition of small business as part of a local economic development strategy. As tourism and real estate development become central elements in the new urban economy, traditional shopping districts carry potential utilitarian value as "sense of place" becomes an important commodity in the era of globalization. The local retail and neighborhood characteristics constitute a distinctive urban experience and become amenities that attract visitors and potential residents.

In this research, I examined a particular commercial revitalization strategy called the “Main Street Approach”. It is a preservation-based strategy that emphasizes four areas of change—design, promotion, organization, and economic restructuring—to comprehensively revitalize traditional commercial districts. As both cities and grass-roots practitioners are looking for best practices, the Main
Street Approach presents a model for small-scale commercial district revitalization through historic preservation and grassroots participation. Its Four-Point Approach helps practitioners to address several key aspects of commercial revitalization, and its organizational aspect encourages greater participation beyond just the business communities. More importantly, as historic preservation becomes one of the popular place-based strategies to attract investment to cities, the Main Street Approach helps to create a new mode of community development that is no longer about fighting poverty, but about creating place identity. It taps into the symbolic economy through the theme of “Main Street”, repackaging commercial revitalization with cultural strategies such as historic preservation. Its grassroots, self-help scheme is also in favor in the neoliberal age, in which partnership with the third sector becomes a popular political strategy to promote economic growth from the bottom up.

Using Baltimore as a case study, I highlighted the increasing attention from the local government in organizing commercial revitalization activities using the Main Street Approach. Baltimore Main Streets, as the second largest city-wide Main Street program, is different in many ways. Many program features reflect those of neoliberal policies, where the city acts as an entrepreneur, with a focus on economic and institutional efficiency to attract capital investment. Begun as part of the neighborhood revitalization initiative, the program has come to be considered as an economic development strategy rather than a social policy within the domain of community development. Housed under a quasi-development agency, its program structure gives the program practitioners tools...
such as eminent domain-- to address the program's efficiency in property
development. The city-wide promotional event “Miracle on Main Streets”
features a series of special events to encourage people to shop locally and at the
same time promote neighborhood districts to a wider audience. Partnership with
the National Trust via the ready-made “Main Street Approach” formula for
commercial revitalization reduced the learning curve of individual communities,
but also reflected the idea of efficiency in program implementation. Furthermore,
the model’s national reputation helped boost the Baltimore Main Streets'
program recognition, as part of the mayor’s attempt to draw national attention
and investment. The implementation of the Main Street program in Baltimore
reflects the focus on external consumption, to make the area more appealing to
potential shoppers, businesses, and investors.

As a response to the neoliberal context, the “self-help” approach emphasizes
social cohesion and the financial commitment of the neighborhood, but also
intensifies social-economic inequality since financial and volunteer resources are
often lacking in poor neighborhoods. I also see social inequality and spatial
unevenness toward the implementation of the program. A typology is
developed—competitive, transitional, and redevelopment—to describe three
types of commercial districts based on the social-economic characteristics of the
district and nearby areas. Main Street activities, in competitive and
redevelopment districts, are meant to complement the current development
trend, whether it is market-led or a state-led. In competitive districts, where
financial capital and volunteer resources are relatively abundant, the Main Street
program helps to transform the physical appearance of the district at a faster rate that complements the emerging destination businesses, and promotes the district into a regional shopping area. Redevelopment districts, with the least neighborhood resources in any regard, often rely on the state for large-scale physical improvements. In redevelopment districts, the Main Street program’s approach to commercial revitalization is to provide additional selling points to the larger redevelopment scheme, whether it is a housing complex, a tourism destination or a bio-tech park. But some neighborhoods remain underserved because little sign of private capital, either small or large, has entered the area. Except in transitional districts, the neighborhood Main Street organization seems to initiate different focuses, depending on the market conditions and assets of the district. Some focus on organizing merchants while others focus on business development. In these areas, the Main Street program represents an opportunity to tailor the needs of districts and help create a diverse shopping district with a mix of neighborhood-serving and destination businesses.

As a preservation-based strategy, the Main Street model itself represents several opportunities and challenges to neighborhood commercial revitalization. Located in traditional commercial districts where space is often constrained, these places are less likely to incorporate businesses serving the local neighborhood. In the changing retail landscape, neighborhood serving businesses have been dominated by large corporations, where extensive floor space and parking are required. At first, chains do not want to change their formula to accommodate the space constraints in a traditional shopping area. At the same
time, the compact, walkable feature of traditional shopping districts tend to attract boutiques and specialty retailing that looks for that kind of urban experience. Once the market become matured by these capital ventures, like those in competitive shopping districts, the anti-corporate sentiment increases among the business community, which seeks to maintain the neighborhood’s characters and “sense of place”. They often become the destination for regional consumption rather than local need. In redevelopment districts, large scale intervention, either through state or private market, is often required. The incremental approach of the Main Street program is probably too slow to combat the high vacancy. Preservation, ultimately, becomes a historic theme, rather than an approach to revitalization in these areas. It is in the transitional district, where the market condition has improved, but at the same time, that has enough vacancies to accommodate the neighborhood-serving formula businesses. The Main Street organizations in these areas have the opportunity to maximize the program's comprehensive approach to making these areas a true community business district.

The Main Street Approach also has the potential ability to “open up” the neighborhoods, whether through promotional events or through organization. Unlike a merchant association, which only focuses on sales events, Main Street’s promotions also focus on festivals or special events to make the place "fun" while also helping to reimage it. The particular atmosphere these events generate have the potential effect of attracting business or potential residents who seek a particular lifestyle. The idea of organization in Main Street via volunteering
allows a new set of actors, either residents or newcomers, to participate in the commercial sphere which was traditionally dominated by merchants and property owners. In competitive neighborhoods, commercial upgrading seems to be the dominant voice in change, as the neighborhood has been gentrified and residents see commercial gentrification as a better fit for their residential communities. In redevelopment districts, Main Street is more likely to take a pro-growth approach, since anything is welcome in a distressed area. The most controversial situation could happen in the transitional districts, where the capital is moving in and the characteristics of the area are changing. Therefore, the commercial district could potentially become a contested ground between residents and merchants, between old and new, to define the characteristics of the commercial space as the area improves.

My empirical analysis of the real estate markets also reflects the potential effect of the Main Street program on neighborhoods at large. Both commercial and residential properties in Main Street districts have experienced higher property appreciation rates than properties in other traditional shopping districts. Duration of the program’s existence does matter. Properties in seven pilot neighborhoods, regardless of the neighborhood typology, experience higher appreciation on average. The effects also spill over to the residential properties nearby, which provide evidence of the potential utilitarian value of commercial revitalization to the neighborhood overall, making it a collective interest of the neighborhood rather than simply an effort of the business community. This may also reflect, perhaps not directly, the city’s potential interest in commercial
revitalization beyond small business development but extends to the overall improvement of the neighborhood, from the perspective of real estate development. Neighborhood commercial district revitalization not only creates new shopping destinations for cities, but also makes the neighborhood more desirable in the real estate markets. However, the desirability of the property also translates to potential increased rent this area, which creates a potential burden for the merchants. The financial pressure could potentially result in displacement if their business sales do not benefit from the commercial revitalization related activities. This could become particularly problematic in redevelopment districts, since I found that properties in lower income areas, on average, have experienced higher appreciation rates than affluent areas. In fact, the effect of revitalization on the affordability of commercial space has been the dilemma of commercial revitalization (Hirt and Sellars 2007; Murphy and Cunningham 2003). How to maintain the social diversity of a commercial district becomes an important issue to address beyond the revitalization efforts.

Adopting the Main Street Approach to commercial district revitalization aims to be incremental but comprehensive through its Four-Point model--design, promotion, organization, and economic restructuring. However, the city’s funding structure results in unevenness of implementation, where physical improvements and promotion are much more prevalent than the other two. With the city’s emphasis on businesses and job creation, Main Street organizations become the neighborhood agents of economic development and are engaged in reproducing neoliberal priorities at a highly localized level (Elwood 2002). They
helps neighborhoods to present themselves as having a “good business climate” for reinvestment, and help to reduce the risk of investment in these inner city neighborhoods. On the other hand, these organizations also often are the only resources to work with the local merchants and residents to prevent the commercial districts from deteriorating. The city-wide program also provides an opportunity for an inclusive approach to local economic development by emphasizing small businesses. However, its ability to organize for any collective interest or issue is limited because neighborhoods constantly compete for resources. For every Main Street organization, there is always a balancing act among how to get things done, increase their visibility and efficiency to the city, make neighborhoods attractive to capital, and serve the interests of local communities. Meanwhile, they also have to make themselves self-sustaining without the city’s financial support. With limited financial and human resources, challenging tasks such as business retention will be less likely to be addressed, which makes the Main Street Approach in cities less comprehensive than it is intended to be.

Future Research and Policy Recommendations

In this dissertation, I evaluate the Baltimore Main Streets program as a public policy, and at the same time define patterns in program implementation by neighborhood typology. The unit of analysis is city-wide. However, my research interest at this scale represents some methodological challenges.
Assessing eleven neighborhoods is too extensive for a case study but too limited for statistical analysis. These challenges presented, especially during the data collection phase, therefore limited the type of research questions asked. Much of the descriptive data were gathered via the program operators, namely the Baltimore Main Streets officials and neighborhood Main Street managers. They might be sufficient for the program’s process evaluation, but do not adequately assess the program’s impact. Other secondary data, such as reports and newspaper articles, have been used to reduce the potential bias. But my research on the Main Street program still leaves a void to fill, in particular regarding the program’s impact in the immediate area--the business community. To what extent do the program activities help existing businesses? Are they varied by type of business and their tenure (e.g. renter vs. property owner)? The potential data collection instruments could be surveys, to get general feedback about businesses’ perception of Main Street. However, to get detailed descriptions about Main Street’s impact, here I suggest three pilot case studies on each neighborhood typology-- competitive, transitional, and redevelopment-- for future research. Case studies on each type of Main Street neighborhood would allow the researcher to further understand the program implementation in details at the same time examine the potential effects of the Main Street program. How do other existing policies, such as empowerment zone, RDBL, or historic designation, influence neighborhood changes? How does the makeup of a Main Street organization influence program implementation? How does the Main Street organization change neighborhood politics? This project was unable to examine the dynamic among Main Street, other policies, and neighborhood actors
descriptively, and this needs further exploration. As an extension, case studies on seven pilot Main Street neighborhoods -- two competitive districts, two transitional districts, and three redevelopment districts – are proposed for further research. These case studies would allow the researcher to compare the neighborhood difference within and between each typology in greater detail. By controlling the duration of the program, one can better understand the causation of neighborhood changes and the Main Street impact.

To quantitatively evaluate the impact of a city-wide commercial revitalization program, changes in business-related activities in fact present more direct empirical measurements than property value, as the primary concern of the Main Street program is the economic improvement of the district. They are also more suitable to answer questions on commercial gentrification, which is a major criticism of a preservation-based strategy. Yet my research did not pursue this goal, primarily due to the data availability. Publicly available datasets on business are too aggregated for any Main Street studies to isolate the program’s effect from other economic activities (Ozdil 2006). Commercial business datasets at the address level appear to be the only data sources to study impact of the program implementation in the non-pre-existing administrative boundaries like Main Streets. Several potential datasets have been identified during the data collection phase, such as the Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) business dataset and Reference USA employer dataset. These commercial datasets track changes such as number of businesses, size of establishment, type of business and annual sales etc. In fact, the D&B database has been used in an earlier study on the effect of
downtown improvement projects on retail activity (Weisbrod and Pollakowski 1984). For a time-series study, the National Establishment Time-Series Database (NETS) is another potential commercial dataset based on the D&B database that documented economic activities from 1989 through 2006 (Walls & Associates 2008). However, the cost associated with these datasets is high, which creates another constraint to this type of research at a city-wide level. In addition, many micro to small businesses, especially those marginal businesses in the neighborhood districts, are not included in these databases.

This leads to a policy suggestion, which concerns public data on the business community. The dynamics in the neighborhood commercial district would have been better understood if there were more public data available at a finer scale. There has been an emerging trend of descriptive study of neighborhood retail districts with a focus on commercial gentrification, but rarely has empirical analysis been done due to the lack of data (Koebel 2001). In fact, the local government records many types of business related data, including statistics on business operation, sale, and employees, at the address level. They are recorded and maintained in different departments, with some remaining recorded in the paper format (e.g. business license). Research on neighborhood businesses, or small business in general, would be easier if this information could be integrated and maintained in a modern database format. As the director of Baltimore Main Streets suggests, the fundamental challenge for her to lobby for resources is lack of data on neighborhood micro businesses to prove their importance to urban economy. This is applicable not only for the Main Street
program but for studying business population at the neighborhood scale more
generally. How to balance privacy concerns and the right to access public
information are other issues, but at least maintaining a database of a similar kind
would facilitate more research to understand the dynamics in these
neighborhood spaces. At minimum, the city-wide Main Street program should
make documentation of existing business a requirement for neighborhood Main
Street managers. Tracking existing businesses and noting how business
composition changes as the area is revitalized should be as important as tracking
new jobs and new businesses.

By maintaining relationships with existing businesses, the manager can be a
great asset for understanding whether a closure of business is a personal failure
or due to structural change in the neighborhood. As mentioned above, current
assistance on small business relies greatly on the idea of self-help. However, often
working as the only employee in the store, small business owners can be
constrained by their work hours and do not necessarily have free time to reach
out and seek assistance. The Main Street program has the opportunity to counter
this trend. One of the key program features that makes Main Street Approach
different than other commercial revitalization strategies is “business retention,”
in the dimension of economic restructuring. Economic restructuring, overall, is
not simply to follow the market trend, but rather to create a healthy and diverse
commercial district. Business retention in this context aims to help existing
business create a business plan, and assist them to diversify their merchandise to
reach out different customers. Helping existing businesses grow more secure is as
important as having a prettier storefront to make the register ring. As a full-time employee devoted to help the revitalization of the neighborhood commercial district, the neighborhood Main Street manager is the opportunity to channel a city’s business assistance on a place-based level. They can reach out to neighborhood small businesses in their area on a day-to-day basis. The managers and the city-wide program could also provide a great platform and knowledge base to address collective issues that small business face in the inner city, such as crime.

However, the existing program structure, with financial resources attached only to façade improvement and promotion, does not make business restructuring a priority. For Main Street managers to focus on this point, it requires the city to devote attention and resources to help existing business operations, in addition to physical improvements. This includes financial resources to hire additional staff, or city-wide coordinated efforts to conduct market analysis or recruit alternative volunteer resources with a specialty of small business assistance. One of the issues that Main Street organizations encounter is the lack of market analysis to pursue businesses investment in the inner neighborhoods. Currently, conducting market analysis is much relied on individual neighborhood, which is often expensive to acquire in the first place. A report called “Baltimore Neighborhood Market DrillDown” (Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute 2007) is the latest effort by a nonprofit organization to address the need to understand the inner-city market collectively at the city-wide level. This study covers twelve
underserved neighborhood districts, which includes five out of eleven Main Street districts. It intends to provide informed data to attract investors, but market analysis of this kind can also become a useful asset for neighborhood Main Street managers regarding business retention, to understand what potential markets existing business could tap into. The Main Street managers can help address the needs of neighborhoods through both business recruitment and business retention, or work with other community organizations to support local entrepreneurs.

As for volunteer recruitment on business restructuring, one of the assets that a large city has compared to small towns is the concentration of higher education and professionals. As mentioned by one of the managers in a transitional district, she hired summer interns from nearby universities, and business-major students who return home during the summer to do business retention and development in her district. A neighborhood manager was approached by unemployed business professionals to volunteer, in order to fill a gap on a resume during the economic recession. These are examples of alternative resources that can be utilized and recruited a city-wide level, rather than kept as secret volunteer sources that neighborhoods compete for. The idea of collaboration can be extended beyond the annual collective promotional event that the Baltimore Main Streets has pioneered, to regular business assistance and volunteer recruitment.

Yet, to maintain a healthy and diverse neighborhood commercial district in the process of commercial revitalization, one of the key factors for business
retention is to maintain affordability of commercial space in the district. Rising rent is often the unintended consequence as the economic conditions of an area improve (Murphy and Cunningham 2003). Businesses either have to charge higher prices to their customers to cover the cost, or ultimately be displaced due to the higher rent. In the end, only high-end users such as boutiques or restaurants or chains can pay higher rents. The impact on the poor is often the greatest, as the prices increase, or their stores and services are displaced (Zukin et al. 2009). However, commercial gentrification is not a new phenomenon. Many lessons learned from revitalized downtowns can be good lessons for neighborhood commercial revitalization. Planning practices such as zoning have been used as innovative strategies to achieve appropriate mix of use. A few local governments use zone districts, numerical limits on specific uses, spacing requirements, and size restrictions to maintain the diversity of use in a commercial district. Similar to affordable housing, some local governments use incentives or regulation such as linkage programs to encourage the creation of affordable commercial space via new development (Hirt and Sellars 2007). Regardless of which strategy is used, it is the acknowledgement of these local governments that revitalization and local-serving should go hand in hand that is key. If the goal of Main Street is preservation and place-making, preserving the diversity of business, with a healthy mix of neighborhood-oriented commercial use, should be considered equally important as economic development or aesthetic preservation of the district. Having different types of neighborhoods in different economic conditions, ranging from competitive, to transitional, to redevelopment, the Baltimore Main Streets program provides valuable lessons
for local neighborhoods to learn from each other. Less prosperous areas can learn the best practices of how to become competitive, but at the same time prepare for the potential negative consequences of revitalization.

A city-wide program, like Baltimore Main Streets, provides an opportunity to address issues and create solutions on commercial revitalization collectively. The idea of collective holiday promotion can expend to other dimensions of Main Street Approach. By working with neighborhood managers, the program gain knowledge and experience about commercial revitalization at the very local level. On the other hand, city-wide coordinating efforts could help bring awareness at a higher level and provide solutions more effectively. Meanwhile, the recognition on different resources needed for different type of neighborhood is essential. Redevelopment districts, in particular, will need extra resources not only on physical improvements but on organization and economic restructuring as well. How to allocate resources to help even out structural difference of the neighborhoods will be the key to full program implementation to make the program a place-making strategy beyond economic development.
Appendices
Appendix I: Baltimore Main Streets Organization Chart (source: Baltimore Development Corporation)
Appendix II: Types of Main Street Organization Structure (source: National Main Street Center 2004)

### Typical Main Street Structure

- Board of Directors
  - Advisory Board
  - Main Street Manager
  - Office Assistant and/or Marketing Director

### Executive Committee

- Membership and Development Committee
- Design Subcommittee
- Economic Restructuring Committee
- Promotion Committee
  - Annual Campaign Team
  - Facade Grant Review Subcommittee
  - Business Recruitment Subcommittee
  - Business Retention Team
  - Special Events Subcommittee

### Structure within an Existing Organization

- Board of Directors for larger organization
- Main Street Committee
- Main Street Manager
- Assistant

### Committees

- Economic Restructuring Subcommittee
- Design Subcommittee
- Fundraising or Communications Subcommittee
- Promotion Subcommittee

Source: Lauren Adkins
National Main Street Center
Appendix III: Assessment Year by Main Street Neighborhoods

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Neighborhood</th>
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<td>East Monument</td>
<td>2004/2007</td>
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<td>2005, 2006/2008</td>
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<td>2003/2006</td>
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<td>2004/2007</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania Avenue</td>
<td>2004/2007</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pigtown</td>
<td>2005/2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waverly</td>
<td>2004/2007</td>
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Appendix IV: Property Data Preparation

In this research, I have taken advantage of the technology of geographic information systems (GIS) for much of the data integration and preparation. In order to spatially locate individual properties, I first matched the Real Property Sale Database requested from the state department to a GIS parcel dataset available from Baltimore Enterprise GIS. This method allows us to locate properties with a higher matching rate\textsuperscript{23} as compared to conventional geocoding methods. Also it is easy to identify properties within and beyond the Main Street boundaries with higher positional accuracy.\textsuperscript{24}

To make sure the observations included in the analysis are comparable, only properties in the traditional shopping district (TSD) neighborhoods are selected in the observations. The operational definition of “traditional shopping districts” in this analysis include 11 Main Street districts and 7 non-Main Street old shopping districts in Baltimore City. Rather than using census tract or zipcode for the boundaries of analysis, areas within a 5-10 minute walking distance from the traditional shopping districts were created as the traditional shopping district neighborhoods. The neighborhoods of traditional shopping districts are artificially created using the ArcGIS 9.3 buffer tool to create $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and $\frac{1}{2}$ buffer zones around each traditional shopping district polygon as neighboring

\textsuperscript{23} For geocoding, an 80% matching rate is conventionally considered as good success rate. The repeat sale properties dataset is joined to the parcel dataset with a success rate of 95%.

\textsuperscript{24} The Main Street boundaries were drawn based on the parcel dataset. The positional accuracy of a geocoded location is highly dependent on the positional accuracy of the street dataset. (i.e. it could be 500 feet off from its actual location if a TIGER street file is used against geo-coding).
properties near a TSD.\textsuperscript{25} Then I use these buffer polygons to select all of the medium-density commercial and residential properties as the observations in the regression analysis. The idea of this operation is to include properties of analysis based on their spatial relationship to the commercial district, not based on their pre-existing administrative boundaries. From these observations I can compare the property value change within or beyond the Main Street districts and at the same time compare the effect of Main Street designation to other non-Main Street traditional shopping districts. Despite the spatial extent of these TSD buffer polygons which cover most of the downtown, I have excluded properties in the downtown area where the property types and real estate market could be substantially different from the neighborhood properties.

For the structural attributes such as year built, number of units or floor space, I are not able to take advantage the information usually available in the Real Property Sale Database since there are many missing values in these fields. As the results, I have to rely on the GIS land use dataset and parcel dataset to get the information on detailed land use and parcel size information. This allows me to narrow the population of study to all the medium density commercial properties only for a more comparable result. For the neighborhood attributes, I collected household information on transportation from the US Census Department and neighborhood conditions from a local organization called the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance. I then joined the property dataset to the 2000 Census at the census block level with household attributes such as race.

\textsuperscript{25} Since buffer tools use aerial distance rather than a Manhattan distance, it may under estimate the walking distance of a property to the shopping area.
education and income. Neighborhood conditions such as crime rates, vacancy rate, rehabilitation rate, and commercial vacancy rate are joined at the Community Statistical Areas level\textsuperscript{26} to help locate the properties in a larger neighborhood context. For the distance variables, I used several geographic datasets from Baltimore Enterprise GIS to calculate the distance attributes for each record. Network distance for each distance variable was calculated using Origin Designation Cost Matrix tool in Network Analysis in ArcGIS 9.3.

\textsuperscript{26} Community Statistical Areas (CSAs) are clusters of 260 artificial neighborhood boundaries created by the Baltimore City Planning Department. Traditional neighborhood boundaries are not consistent with the statistical boundaries of the census. They are organized based on Census Tract boundaries but much more aggregated spatially to simulate the traditional neighborhood boundaries. (Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance, 2008#)
Appendix V- Preparation of Repeatedly-Sold Dataset

In order to calculate the annual appreciation rate based on the actual sale price, I narrowed all the properties in Baltimore City to those that have been repeatedly sold at least twice between 1996 and 2008. For those properties with more than two sale transaction records, I calculated the increase based on first and latest sale transaction price. Finally, to omit the sale records that do not involve in total conveyance (i.e. only a garage is sold), I eliminate properties with all sale considerations that are less than $5,000. This threshold is also used by Baltimore Department of Planning to investigate the pattern of single family property transactions in the city. As a result, the total number of observations includes only 283 repeatedly-sold commercial properties and 5070 repeatedly-sold residential properties. Two types of adjusted appreciation rates are calculated for each repeat-sale property: CPI-adjusted annual appreciation rate and locally-adjusted annual appreciation rate.

CPI-adjusted Annual Appreciation Rate

First, I adjusted all sale prices by the housing component of the local Consumer Price Index-All Urban Consumer (CPI-U) for the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area. The following equation is used to calculate the annual appreciation rate (AAR) for the period between two sale transactions:
For those properties sold twice during the 1996-2008 period, one CPI-adjusted AAR will be generated for these observations. Since I have up to three sale records available in the dataset, some observations may have three sale transaction prices recorded. For these properties, three AAR will be generated for each observation. If a property, for example, has been sold in the years of 2000, 2002 and 2008, the first CPI-adjusted AAR will be the fraction of the CPI adjusted price for 2002 (the numerator) and the CPI adjusted price for 2000 (the denominator) with the exponent of 1/2. The second CPI-adjusted AAR will be the fraction of the CPI adjusted price for 2008 and the CPI adjusted price for 2002 with the exponent of 1/6. The third CPI-adjusted AAR will be based on the difference between 2000 and 2008. Only the third CPI-adjusted AAR, with the appreciation between the earliest and latest sale transactions, will be used in the final regression analysis.

Locally-adjusted Annual Appreciation Rate

The second type of adjusted AAR uses a similar equation, except I normalized the sale price by local average sale price for a particular year. The rationale behind this is because each city may experience different real estate dynamics that are counter-cyclic to the metropolitan area of CPI-U. Therefore, I deflate the sale price by the mean of all sales of a particular type of property.
within Baltimore City during the specific year. The local average sale prices for commercial and residential properties for a particular year are different, as they are averaged based on different groups of observations.

\[
\text{AAR}_{\text{local-adjusted}} = \left( \frac{\text{sale1 price} / \text{sale2 price}}{\text{Average local sale price in sale1 year} / \text{Average local sale price in sale2 year}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\text{sale1 year} - \text{sale2 year}}}
\]

Again, at least one locally-adjusted annual appreciation rate will be generated for each record. For those repeatedly sold three times during the study period, three locally-adjusted annual appreciation rates will be generated for each record. If a residential property has been sold in the years of 2000, 2002 and 2008, the numerator for the first local-adjusted AAR will be the fraction of the sale price for 2002 and sale price for 2000. The denominator will be the fraction of the mean value of all residential properties sold in the year of 2002 and the mean value of all residential properties sold in the year of 2000. The exponent value for this equation will be 1/2. The second locally-adjusted AAR is calculated by dividing the fraction of the sale price for 2008 and sale price for 2002, and the fraction of the average of all residential properties sold in the year of 2008 and the average of all residential properties sold in the year of 2000. The exponent value will be 1/6 for the second AAR. The last locally-adjusted AAR will be calculated based on the price on 2000 and 2008. Only the last adjusted AAR with the appreciation between the earliest and latest sale transactions will be used in the final regression analysis.
Appendix VI- Regression Model based on Sale Price, Summary Descriptive Statistics

### Table 17. Summary Descriptive Statistics, Repeatedly-Sold Medium-Density Commercial Properties, 1996-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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### Table 18. Summary Descriptive Statistics, Repeatedly-Sold Residential Properties, 1996-2008

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zc6EAqeKxp4&playnext_from=TL&v=upnG7WuXV_w


