“It Takes a Village”:
Urban Change in the Elmwood Neighborhood, 1990-2016

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By

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploratory case study into the spatial processes behind the redevelopment of the Elmwood Strip into the Elmwood Village, a commercial district in Buffalo, NY, which had suffered from economic and social decline during the 1970s, ‘80s, and ‘90s. Initially, print media deemed that a neighborhood institution – Forever Elmwood - was an integral element in the evolution and development of the “strip” into the “village.” However, I look beyond this narrative to consider other potentially important catalysts behind the area’s redevelopment. I also examine the spatial outcomes that resulted from these changes using the accounts of key decision makers’ perceptions of the area’s changes. This extends into what they believe are the implications for future inner-city redevelopment in the city and area. Close examination reveals the area’s redevelopment and success is the result of not only the work of key institutions and actors but also a combination of developmental tools and policies. More specifically, place marketing and branding campaigns, and urban planning design guidelines helped build Elmwood into an urban village and a successful Rust Belt neighborhood.

Key words: urban redevelopment, urban village, institution
Chapter 1

Introduction

“Community exists in the space where history and hope meet, where an awareness of the past and a belief in the future inspire people to identify with a place and to dedicate themselves to its improvements.” – Mark Goldman

In 2007, urban activist, entrepreneur, and local historian Mark Goldman published a comprehensive history of the City of Buffalo, dating from the Pan-American Exposition in 1901 to the mid-2000s, titled *City on the Edge: Buffalo, New York*. The history he described exemplifies the changes – both positive and negative – Rust Belt cities of the Northeast experienced over the past century: industrial might, urban growth, racial tension, and subsequent urban decline. While Goldman’s piece is interspersed with nostalgia for the city’s former form and industrial-economic strength, the underlying dismal theme throughout the book remains: decline. Yet the story Goldman tells is not entirely negative. He also offers a story of hope through community-based histories and development at the neighborhood scale in Buffalo.

Such hope is provided in Goldman’s concluding chapter titled, “Now is the Time: Restoring a Sense of Place.” Here, he turns to the many neighborhoods throughout the city and examines how their characteristics and organization promote citizenry and activism, generating a sense of optimism for a declining city moving into the 21st century. Through small case studies of its many neighborhoods, Goldman promotes faith in the city, allowing Buffalonians to envision a bright future moving forward. The last neighborhood he examines in this chapter is the Elmwood Village. The Elmwood Village – Goldman (2007) argues – “has been the result of the many people who live and work within the Elmwood community,” and “through these
efforts, a ‘strong sense of place’ known as the ‘Elmwood Village’ has become a state of mind and has allowed it to become arguably the city’s most successful neighborhood” (p. 397).

This thesis explores Elmwood’s evolution into one of Buffalo’s more successful neighborhoods, even as the rest of the city stagnated. The neighborhood’s success is represented by positive social and economic investment in the neighborhood and on Elmwood Avenue, which is indicated through informants’ perceptions and media (see APA, 2007). In recent years, growing economic competition among American cities has emphasized the need for cities to attract and retain creative class and millennial groups. Affluence, in addition to these cohorts, has reversed its past trend in expanding outward from cities and has instead reverted back to the city (Ehrenhalt, 2013). Centrality, or the return and renewed desire to locate and live in the center of cities, in particular, has been crucial to this trend. Movements to large American cities show that full-time skilled workers prefer a central location for work and recreation due to time scarcity, and such reasoning can be represented through a rising price premium in centrality due to their increased presence (Edlund et al., 2015). Such demand for living in central cities has also been fueled by the desire for urban amenities and lifestyles, especially amongst youth populations today (Moos, 2014, 2015), displaying desires from the past (see Zukin, 1989).

Skill and creativity are argued to be vital in developing and growing urban economies (Florida, 2002). Rust Belt cities today in the United States – Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo – are attempting to strategically redevelop and rebuild their economies around the youthful and creative individuals that other prospering cities are attracting. For that process to occur, Rust Belt cities need to develop not only employment opportunities - whether that means attracting high-tech businesses or developing educational and medical institutions – but also
build on their “urban” strengths, which supply what so many of these prospective incoming people demand, and help retain them.

Elmwood is a mixed-use, high-density, walkable neighborhood in Buffalo, NY. Having developed into an arguably strong and culturally rich neighborhood (APA, 2007), Elmwood is a source for Buffalo to move forward. Built around cultural institutions like the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Burchfield Penney Art Center, and Kleinhans Music Hall, Elmwood has risen since the mid-1990s and has been established as one of America’s Great Neighborhoods (APA, 2007). A 19th century product from the marriage of Joseph Ellicott’s city plans and Frederick Law Olmsted’s park system, Elmwood has been fortunate to have both a strong skeletal structure and prime location, which have allowed it to become a premier mixed-use, urban neighborhood. Composed of over 200 locally-owned boutique shops, restaurants, bars, and surrounding residents, Elmwood has been branded as a village and a destination that is frequented by not only local “villagers” and suburbanites, but also people from afar.

However, the very changes that revitalized this urban neighborhood create trade-offs for some. Today, Elmwood is in a shifting state. No longer does it have the “urban grit” nor the artistic and bohemian extent of earlier years. Demographics and demand for the area are changing, ultimately fueling gentrification in the area. Families and affluent individuals are moving back-to-the-city, seeking an urban lifestyle. Residential rents are rising. And local business operations are threatened due to the emergence of national chains on the street. All of which are altering the character from what it once was.

Within the context of Buffalo, NY’s Elmwood, I question, first, how and why has the Elmwood Village evolved over into Buffalo’s more successful neighborhoods, despite the city’s decline? And second, what are the spatial – both economic and social – outcomes of the area’s
redevelopment? Through an exploratory case study, I utilize semi-structured interviews and archival sources to uncover the processes of the Elmwood neighborhood’s evolution and the outcomes of its redevelopment in order to identify how it has come to such local prominence. Through this exploration, I provide a detailed account of my respondents’ knowledges on the area’s changes and their thoughts on potentially new zoning policies in the City of Buffalo. This extends into what they believe are the implications for future inner-city redevelopment in both the city and Elmwood area.

First, I describe the spatial processes Buffalo and, more broadly, Rust Belt cities have undergone since the mid-20th century. Deindustrialization, suburbanization, and white flight are some of said processes that have drastically affected Buffalo’s decline (Goldman, 1983, 2007). During that time, cities utilized a number urban renewal tactics to improve urban economies. Today; however, cities, under the “entrepreneurial city” theory have evolved and have acted as business entrepreneurs, rather than managers (Harvey, 1989; Hall & Hubbard, 1996; Jessop, 1998), where branding and marketing schemes have taken place in order to compete within the interurban and global marketplace. This theory is key in understanding the tools and policies that have been utilized more recently through urban governance to combat the many problems that have hampered Rust Belt cities. Creative branding, marketing, public-private partnerships – are just a few of many economic development tools that have been utilized (Sager, 2011), in addition to the planning and practicing of new urbanist best practices for redevelopment schemes within urban neoliberalism. Furthermore, I touch upon a varied literature on spatial outcomes, including topics on economic growth, gentrification, demographic inversion, and policy transfer and mobility. With literature suggesting that commercial streets have certain evolutions (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1997; Roth & Grant, 2015): from working-class commercial corridor, to a
place connected to poverty and crime, to an “edgy” and bohemian arts district, eventually arriving to a gentrified neighborhood (Roth & Grant, 2015), as changing retail dynamics between local and national chains (Litvin & Jaffe, 2010; Litvin & DiForio, 2014),

Rooted in mixed methods – both qualitative and quantitative – I utilize the exploratory case study method to approach my research questions. Data was primarily elicited through semi-structured interviews and archival news sources. My questions on the evolution and redevelopment of Elmwood are investigated through the use of archival collections of *Buffalo News* and *Courier-Express* articles, *Buffalo Rising* blogs, *Buffalo Business First* articles, policy documentation, and semi-structured interviews with government officials, developers, real estate agents, and community members within key community groups. Decennial and American Community Survey census data was also collected and embedded with my qualitative data to serve as a supportive and secondary role in the case study (Creswell, 2013) in order to better describe the neighborhood’s trends over time.

I also provide a historical geography from the early 1970s to the early 2000s. Streetscape and beautification projects in the mid-1990s, marketing and branding campaigns made by a non-profit dedicated to neighborhood revitalization, grants, and scalar relationships between key actors and city government fueled the beginnings of Elmwood’s evolution. Additionally, I offer a discussion on the importance of the neighborhood organization’s urban branding and marketing schemes of the Elmwood “Strip” and their latter conceptualization of the area as an urban village.

Furthermore, I presents the results of the study on the current state of the Elmwood Village and insight into its future in which I show contemporary spatial outcomes of both past and present developments. A neighborhood institution is seen as vital in the redevelopment of
Elmwood by bridging communication gaps between residents and businesses, and through forming partnerships with developers and city government. While this research is substantially qualitative, quantitative data on demographic and economic trends in the Elmwood Village is presented, contributing to the explanation of the area’s changes.
Chapter 2

Urban Village: Development, Designation, and Design

During the latter half of the 20th century, urban space within older industrial cities was transformed by the dual processes of deindustrialization and suburbanization. These spatial processes have led to the both the decline of inner-city neighborhoods and commercial districts, and the decentralization of urban cores through the process of sprawl. Facing these processes today, cities throughout the United States have drawn upon numerous entrepreneurial strategies to attract creativity and youth for economic redevelopment (see Sager, 2011). Using these “neoliberal urban policy packages” (Zimmerman, 2008) - tactics developed by city officials, planners, strategists, to attract and retain mobile capital - urban governments of declining cities, like Buffalo, NY, attempt to attract members of the creative class and Millennial cohort through policy and planning efforts. Despite a vast literature on the topic and place, little has discussed the convergence of redevelopment and policy within the context of Buffalo, NY.

Past Issues and Urban Problem Solving in Buffalo, NY

Historically, it is important to note how Buffalo has struggled with both economic and social issues in the past before providing more contemporary discussion on the topic. Work on Buffalo’s early history (Goldman, 1983, 2006) and Buffalo’s postindustrial history (Goldman, 2006) provides in-depth discussion on how the city has handled spatial processes such as deindustrialization, suburbanization, and urban renewal.

Prior to deindustrialization, Buffalo was a strong grain and steel packaging city. Its emergence was largely due to the construction of the Erie Canal in 1825. The canal was pinnacle
because it created a navigable water route that passed through the city connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. In 1900, Buffalo’s growth was ranked 8th in population among American cities and further saw an influx of population from incoming European immigrants. As the city moved towards the mid-20th century, a few key events drastically altered the city’s economic geography, influencing its decline. The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, rearranged the way in which goods were transported across the Great Lakes, sacking the Erie Canal’s former role. A crucial fixture in the Seaway’s expansion was Ontario’s Welland Canal. The canal allowed the shipment of goods heading east to be transported quicker across the Great Lakes, bypassing Buffalo and consequently diminishing its need as a key processing center. The waterway’s advancement accelerated the process further by causing industries to close shop. The graining industry along the waterfront, in particular, lost thousands of jobs due to the Seaway’s construction (Goldman, 1983).

Employment loss and white flight, in addition to the decline of Buffalo’s industries, further affected the city’s internal mechanisms. Over the course of 30 years, the proportion of Buffalo’s urban white population to Erie County’s total white population declined from 63.4% in 1950 to 28.3% to 1980, while the proportion of white population over total population in Erie County only decreased from 95.2% to 88.0% during that time (Price, 1991). Furthermore, the average household income for the city dropped from $8,586 in 1970 to $6,980 in 1980.1

With the loss of affluent whites to the suburbs - and later to the south and southwest “Sunbelt” regions of the United States - a number of urban renewal policies were put in place in hopes of correcting Buffalo’s course, and reverse the economic decline and disinvestment it was

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1 Calculations were adjusted for inflation in 1970 dollars. They were made using Geolytics data on the census tract level for 1970 and 1980 ($14,823 in 1980 dollars), where fields used were aggregates of household income for each tract, divided by total number of households in the city of Buffalo.
experiencing. Like many throughout post-war America, urban renewal projects were hopeful amongst policymakers and planners (Cohen, 2007). However, a number of individuals – Jane Jacobs being a large opponent – believed that such renewal adversely affected urban environments (Jacobs, 1961).

Urban renewal development in Buffalo - like Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis and Robert Moses’ highways in New York City - created more issues to an already troubled city. The formation of public housing and construction of Buffalo’s expressway system along the Niagara riverfront and across Delaware Park contributed to “the formation and maintenance of concentrated poverty” (Kraus, 2004, p. 482). At the time, those developments cut off and confined many African Americans to the East Side of Buffalo, creating a lasting impression on parts of the city where we still see extreme segregation today.

**Contemporary Issues of the Rust Belt**

Deindustrialization, white flight, racial tension, and suburbanization influenced how Buffalo and its surrounding population is organized today. Having lost over 50% of its population since 1950, Buffalo has experienced a number of contemporary issues as a result including vacancy (Silverman et al., 2013; Yin & Silverman, 2015) and segregation (Trudeau, 2006; Yin, 2009). While the dominant figure on Buffalo’s decline is its population and industrial loss, a more important and contemporary occurrence involves the city’s decentralization and outward sprawl.

A number of works have discussed the negative consequences of sprawl from a social, economic and environmental perspective. Research on sprawl has examined: the “ugly” aesthetic products of the phenomenon (strip malls and shopping centers); sprawl’s negative
effects on health; to its drain on the economy of central cities and environmental resources (Kunstler, 1993; Ewing, 1997; Duany et al., 2001; McCann & Ewing, 2003; Hayden & Wark, 2004; Ewing et al., 2008; Hayden, 2009)

![Buffalo-Niagara Metro Area: Urbanized Area & Population, 1950-2000](image)

In the case of the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan region, population has remained relatively constant (Figure 2.1), however, that population spread out (Figure 2.2) over an increasing urban area, and continues to spread out at the urban fringes today (Figure 2.3). With the broader Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan region continuing to sprawl outwards, urban economies within Buffalo and throughout the region are further strained due to a dispersed regional population, diminished tax bases, and the development of new greenfield builds at suburban edges. Over the same period of time, total population in the city has drastically decreased from its peak population of 580,132 in 1950 to 261,310 in 2010 (U.S. Decennial Census). With over a 50% decline in population across a 60 year period, Buffalo is a shrinking city. Shrinking cities in the United States are the result of great population loss due to the
outward migration of people. Often in the form of emigration to the suburbs, this counterurbanization puts strain on urban economies and governments, often through the city’s maintenance of underused infrastructure and vacant housing (see Frazier et al., 2013). Such cities are commonly found in former industrial regions such as the American Rust Belt, and the Ruhr region in western Germany (Hollander et al., 2009).
However, with Rust Belt cities shrinking and on the decline, they are seeking ways in which to alter their economic environment. Within the global economy, competition to attract and retain creative people, who allow cities to grow economically, is key for the accumulation of capital in the global marketplace (Florida, 2002). Rust Belt cities like Buffalo, NY, have drawn upon more creative and contemporary means to solve urban problems and to compete economically. Such changes are often targeted towards the very commercial districts, urban neighborhoods, and traditional “main streets” that fell apart throughout the ‘50s, ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s, where they are now improving (Carter, 2008; Moriarty, 2015). These places have become targets for policy implementation where rebranding older space as being “cool” occurs (Zimmerman, 2008).
Using a wide-variety of “neoliberal” economic development tools (Sager, 2011), urban actors - policy makers, community members, and stakeholders – have applied these to urban neighborhoods and commercial districts. While tools such as tax increment financing (TIFs), tax incentives, public-private partnerships, and place-marketing have been used, implementation of planning movements, such as new urbanist best practices (Katz et al., 1994), indirect and channeled work articulated by Jane Jacobs (1961), and creative city planning (Neal, 2003; Bell & Jayne, 2004; Barnes et al., 2006) have additionally contributed to the refashioning and redesign of urban space through mixed-use, multi-modal transit, and neighborhood planning. Thus, urban governance has played a crucial role in employing the very strategies, policies, and principles across the urban landscape.

**Urban Governance, Development, and Policy Transfer**

In today’s global economy, urban governance allows for the focus on and implementation of policies in both declining and “successful” cities. Such cities draw on Florida’s (2002) creative class thesis in attempt to produce a ‘creative city’ (Barnes et al., 2006; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010) in hopes of attracting and retaining capital driven by talent. In order to look at how cities, create policy we must briefly touch upon theories behind the process of running and managing cities. Urban governance theories, in particular, revolve around the ways in which cities are managed and run in order to function within their own local economy, as well as broader regional, national, and global economies.

Important to this understanding is the work by geographer, David Harvey who focused on changes in urban governance and economy during economic restructuring. In the late ‘80s, a shift occurred from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism. Prior to the entrepreneurial movement, urban governance operated under urban managerialism. Urban
managerialism can be conceptualized as the practice of city government allocating and
distributing resources, facilities, and monies throughout the city and to its people. Primarily
under a welfare state, managerialism contrasted with entrepreneurialism’s neoliberal state,
where, as urban “entrepreneurs”, cities began developing and searching for policies and
marketing strategies that could be utilized to not only generate, but also further attract capital
within the city (Harvey, 1989; Hubbard & Hall, 1996; Jessop, 1998). As Harvey (1989, p. 4)
describes the shift, “urban governments had to be much more innovative and entrepreneurial
[and] willing to explore all kinds of avenues through which to alleviate their distressed
conditions”. Such avenues are often geographical and place-based in nature (Sager, 2011),
where cities are often marketed and branded as cool and attractive places to live (Zimmerman,
2008), and are further placed in the ring of interurban and global competition (McCann, 2004,
2013).

This desire by urban policymakers and officials to generate and sustain capital
accumulation through place-based measures can also be seen through the theory of the growth
machine, which argues that it is imperative for the city to grow economically (Molotch, 1976).
Under this pro-growth theory, we need to understand that it applies to all forms of cities. With a
multitude of cities vying for economic growth, study on interurban competition becomes ever
more important to acknowledge. Competition between municipalities has suggested that there is
a role of local dependency upon urban actors – businesses, corporations, organizations rooted in
metropolitan areas (Cox & Mair, 1988). These actors typically create coalitions and partnerships
with local governments in order to improve their economic goals, as well as the local economy
through harnessing governmental powers. Such powers can be harnessed in the “shadows” of
the structure of urban governance, where bargaining – often as incentives (private financing
through public means) – occurs between private and public interest groups (MacLeod, 2011). These underlying processes provides insight into how urban governance influences the attraction of capital and growth of the city.

While urban actors certainly gain ideas for economic growth within their own network, interurban competition has also allowed governing bodies on multiple scales (local, city, region, national) to not only seek valuable resources (i.e. creative class), but also best practices, policies, ideas, and innovations for competition (McCann, 2011; McCann, 2013; Temenos & McCann, 2013). In looking at spatial diffusion theory we can better understand relationships and processes within global and regional economies that involve the spread of ideas, policies, and innovations.

The spread of innovation has received research attention since Torsten Hägerstrand published his seminal work, *Innovation Diffusion as Spatial Process* in 1967. Diffusion is the spread of an idea or innovation across space and time. It is a mechanism that is frequently based upon communication between and within social networks. This communication among individuals on ideas or innovations helps facilitate the spreading and adoption of such phenomenon, which forms the base of theory on how we can examine and understand the spread of ideas and innovations across space and time. This becomes increasingly important in understanding global transfers of knowledge across space.

More recent literature on diffusion has examined the ways in which policy (McCann, 2011; McCann, 2013; Temenos & McCann, 2013), urban design (e.g. Julier, 2005; Johannson, 2012), and planning ideas (Tait & Jensen, 2007) move across space. Policy transfer, other times referred to as lesson-drawing, emulation, or policy-wagoning, is a type of social diffusion process where, “knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one
time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions in another time and/or place” (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996, p. 344). This spatial progression can commence via agents of transfer, which can include individuals, networks, and organizations, or can proceed through broader processes of globalization (Stone, 1999, 2000). Policy transfer can occur between many different political bodies on multiple scales, spreading from cities to towns, or from local municipalities to states, ultimately operating under urban entrepreneurialism.

In one example of policy transfer, Johannson (2012) examined the diffusion process of LEED certifications across the United States. While the specific investigation was deemed “diffusion,” the process, nonetheless, can be conceptualized as a policy transfer – or rather a transfer of design. Such literature on the spread of designs, even design principles, like new urbanism, has also been investigated in geography (Al-Hindi, 2001). Both pieces, in addition to literature on policy transfer suggest that research on policy implementation, particularly to the physical aesthetics or design of buildings can also take place.

Furthermore, Johannson (2012) concludes that the spread of LEED green-designed buildings may be due to elements of the Richard Florida’s creative class thesis, suggesting that innovative places may be more likely to adopt LEED due to the potential employment opportunities provided to architects and engineers who are the “main ‘knowers’ of building green.” With LEED certification and green-designed buildings suggesting the presence of ‘creative class’ in a particular city, the presence of new-build developments or new urbanist infill may also be indicative of a growing affluent middle-class population within the context of the urban, Rust Belt landscape, as new investment occurs.
Nevertheless, urban policy is becoming increasingly mobile in today’s global economy where cities seek ‘best practices’ to promote themselves among the hierarchical ranks of cities. These mobile policies frequently create a particular feeling when experiencing those policies in person. Possibly a feeling of déjà vu or a thought of, ‘Haven’t I seen something like this before?’ is experienced when realizing the policy on the landscape. Such policies may also be used in a bragging fashion. The notion of policy boosterism is based within the tactical branding and marketing of entrepreneurial city policy, planning, and practices across space and how those policies are transferred from one municipal government to another (McCann, 2013; Temenos & McCann, 2013). With urban centers “boosting” and branding their policy, those policies frequently move throughout space to other urban centers across countries and nations (Ward, 2007). Through the diffusion of these ideas and policy “innovations” we can see how connected cities or places are related. While work on policy mobility and spatial diffusion of ideas and innovations have taken place on the trans-national and global scales, little work has examined regional and small-scale diffusions of policy, as suggested by McCann (2011). By examining these relationships, we can better understand how particular municipalities attempt to plant themselves with in regional, national, and global scales through the communication and adoption of regional “best practice” models. While the examination of these relationships is key, it is also very important to understand the possible spatial ramifications of such mobile policies. McCann’s (2008) work on the policy mobilities of drug policy in Vancouver acknowledges this point, where a greater need for recognizing the “spatiality” of policy and the implications of policy is key.
**Outcomes of Gentrification and Centrality**

With urban governments and actors enacting policy and planning designs, potential implications could be widespread. The attraction of the creative class, youth, and upper-income individuals into urban centers, can have affects upon surrounding neighborhoods and residents in a variety of ways. One such way is gentrification. Gentrification is a spatial process that has seen a great deal of research over the past 40 years, and is one potential outcome of changing urban socio-economic conditions, that can be influenced by changes in policy and place-branding strategies that target the creative class (Atkinson & Easthope, 2008). The topic, in conjunction with urban renewal and urban redevelopment, has been investigated heavily in order to identify the social impacts it has on areas.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s urban policy revolved around urban renewal and slum removal programs. During this time Ruth Glass, a British sociologist, created the term “gentrification” after observing changes in the London real estate market. In her book, London: Aspects of Change (1964), she describes seeing former working-class dwellings being renovated into more expensive housing made by middle class individuals who recently entered the neighborhood (Smith, 1996: 33). The original residents of the neighborhood were soon displaced by the arriving middle class, or “gentry,” who were economically, socially, and culturally different from the original working class.

Historically, the topic of gentrification and its definition have been highly contested topics amongst geographers often causing debate (see Ley (1986) & Smith (1987)). Theories on gentrification have been historically rooted between explanations of production and consumption (Lees et al., 2008), or rather arguments between the return of capital versus the return of people
such arguments often feature spatial implications as a result of gentrification (see Freeman, 2011).

The rent gap theory, as proposed by Neil Smith (1979), utilizes a neoclassical economic approach to explain the gentrification phenomenon in the neighborhood of Society Hill in Philadelphia as a function of production. He argues that gentrification is primarily an economic process and is due to a change in the relationship between real estate investments and space. He finds that disparities existed between the actual rental income of property compared to the much higher potential rental income of property – where investors could take advantage and profit off of. The key to Smith’s argument is ultimately that whereas previous work on gentrification emphasized explanations of demand, his work emphasized production. “[A] broader theory… must take the role of producers as well as consumers into account,” (Smith, 1979, p. 540). Furthermore, Smith argues that consumption explanations are lacking and don’t look at the phenomenon in its entirety.

Contrastingly, the consumption or cultural explanations for gentrification rely heavily on changes in demographics and consumption patterns of those demographics. David Ley (1994) argues that the change in the economic structure during the second half of the 20th century – from industry to service – caused the emergence of a new middle class in Canadian cities. This new middle class, as he describes, had different social, cultural and lifestyle preferences than years prior.

While Smith’s (1979) rent gap hypothesis on production and Ley’s (1994) thesis on consumption were important pieces to the gentrification discussion, newer work on the subject has discussed neoliberalism’s emergence and role with redevelopment schemes and strategies (Smith, 2002), which has led to further questioning and commenting by Lees (2012) on the
subject of whether or not government has played a role in developing, enabling, or shaping
gentrification through policy.

Still recognizing the contested nature of the topic, Andres Duany - a founder of the
Congress for the New Urbanism - argues that “gentrification” is a loaded term and that the
movement of people back to the city is due to the desire for urban amenities (Duany, 2001). His
argument, similar to Ley’s, is rooted in the desire for cultural and lifestyle preferences – the idea
that more people want to have what urban centers have to offer that are not in suburban
residential areas. Duany further suggests that individuals should not be prevented from profiting
and improving the appearance of neighborhoods. Ultimately, Duany argues that poor urban
design is the only way to prevent the phenomenon, where the many urban amenities that are a
product of urban design would not necessarily be available.

Touching upon Duany’s point, recent work by Ehrenhalt (2013) has proposed a broader
alternative – “demographic inversion” - to gentrification theses, contending that a change in
migration patterns between major cities and suburbs is occurring. The process, as Ehrenhalt
describes, is the “rearrangement of living patterns across an entire metropolitan area, all taken
place at roughly the same time” (Ehrenhalt, 2013, p. 3). Unlike gentrification, demographic
inversion occurs on a broader scale than a neighborhood - a scale in which much of the
gentrification literature focuses – but still features the “affluence” variable into the equation. He
finds that cities are seeing more and more affluent individuals, couples, and families returning to
cities, reversing the very phenomenon of suburbanization that these individuals’ parents
experienced firsthand.

Aligned with Ehrenhalt’s thesis, Edlund et al. (2015) has recently attributed gentrification
processes to an increase in scarcity and the shrinking of leisure time in high-income households.
Through quantitative means, the authors examined 27 American cities that were either in the top-20 population in 1970 and 2010. They found that full-time skilled workers in those cities – under the assumption that those workers spend the majority of their days working and commuting to work - favor close proximity to the city center. Contrary to what was found in 1980, the increased centrality of these workers in 2010 can be observed through increasing price premiums in central city locations.

Edlund et al.’s argument remains that time scarcity for full-time skilled workers has caused central location to become the premier local amenity. Although they examined cities with large populations in both 1970 and 2010, the premise behind the research is that price premiums have shifted from suburban and fringe areas far from city centers to those in central, urban locations. Incorporating Duany (2001) and Ehrenhalt (2013) into this idea, changes between urban and suburban demand are influenced by new desired amenities, whether that is time, walkability, or proximity to work and recreation, these amenities are available within cities and are key in redeveloping schemes to attract youth and creativity.

The rearrangement of demographics that Ehrenhalt (2013) describes, in pair with Edlund et al.’s (2015) thesis on time scarcity and the demand for centrality further expands the idea that Ehrenhalt proposes – the idea that in coming years, cities will have a surplus of individuals who want to live in the city, but will not necessarily have the means to accommodate such demands for urban living. This idea is the very essence in why centrality and centrality of residence is so important in coming years. More and more developments and constructions are expected to occur to account for a growing demand in townhouse, condominium and high-rise apartment living within central cities. Work on this topic of developing in anticipation of increased population – densification – and even more specifically on youth populations (youthification),
has been researched in geography by Moos (2015). Moos (2015) argues that age has become an important factor in delineating urban space, with a growing prevalence of youth living in new, high-density living during a portion of their young adult years.

*Drivers of Cities and Builders of Development*

With gentrification playing such a huge factor in the changing urban landscape today, the dominance of creatives and, more recently, millennials or young cohorts, should have even more discussion in relation to urban change. With both groups playing an important role for cities attempting to generate and sustain economic growth, both have caused cities and their governments to put forth greater efforts, policies, and strategies in order to attract and retain them for global competition. Millennials have been widely researched as a generational cohort (e.g., Howe & Strauss, 1992, 2000). They are of particular interest due to their particular cultural tastes, assertive and goal-oriented personalities (Twenge, 2006), influences on policy, institutions and economic development processes (Burstein, 2013). In addition, they represent an interesting group that is undergoing large amounts of financial strain, where large portions of the cohort do not have the economic means to purchase homes due to their student debt and the job market, where young individuals resort living at home with their parents (Goldman, 2013).

However, with greater numbers of people moving to cities, the Millennial Generation - a cohort that is extremely large in size – is a key group for cities to attract. Their relationship with cities is simple. The generation indicates their distaste for the suburbs, and have different beliefs on, as well as opportunities to homeownership than their parents had (Gallagher, 2013; Xu *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, they are deemed the “go nowhere” generation, on the basis that they drive less and own fewer cars compared with other groups (McDonald, 2015). These factors indicate - especially for urban areas with public transportation and walkable streets - that Millennials are
incredibly important for cities moving into the future. The generation’s characteristics, desires, and needs are differentiated from other generations at the same age. In addition, the Millennial cohort is one that supersedes the size of the baby boomer generation, which has had lasting effect on urban landscapes. Interest in this generation in conjunction with cities, urban centers, and economics is widespread based on their large size and distaste for suburbs (Gallagher, 2013). Millennials and creative class alike are investing in urban living and in cities through residency, employment, education, consumption, and recreation. They are tapping into the urban amenities that urban areas have to offer and further changing cities.

In addition, interurban and global competition now, as illustrated in The Rise of the Creative Class (2002), is facilitated and driven by attracting members of the creative class. The creative class consists of educated youth, professors, entrepreneurs, engineers, scientists, artists, musicians, gays, and bohemians, all of whom – Florida maintains – generates a positive relationship with regional and urban economic growth. Buffalo, at the time of Florida’s study, was ranked 33rd in creative class out of 49 standard metropolitan statistical areas with populations greater than 1 million. Creative and “Super-creative” (employees in science, engineering, higher education, research whose jobs are dedicated towards creativity and innovation) core shares of Buffalo’s employment accounted for 28.9% and 12.6% respectively, out of a total employed population of 566,340. The city’s metropolitan further ranked 83rd out of 268 regions of all sizes that were examined. These numbers are mediocre at best. Further data on Buffalo’s “technology, talent, and tolerance” – important components in attracting and retaining the creative class – show similar dismal numbers. Florida found that Buffalo ranked 40th (high-tech index), 28nd (melting pot index), and 49th (gay index for both 1990 and 2000). Nonetheless, these numbers display Buffalo’s room for improvement. With Florida’s thesis
widely accepted and used across urban governments and public administrative bodies, cities have
governed in ways of, forming “creative” and “cool” urban environments across the urban
landscape (Bell & Jayne, 2004; Barnes et al., 2006; Zimmerman, 2008; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010).

Closely tied to the concept of the creative class is human capital. Just as with creativity,
human capital is argued to be a key ingredient in producing economic growth. Within a Rust
Belt and Northeast regional context, Glaeser (2005) argues that building their economy around
education is vital for cities with cold winters in the Northeast, like Buffalo, who have been
lagging warmer weather cities in education rankings in order to grow their population’s
knowledge to retain in future years. The importance of developing strategies that either attract or
develop human capital are of utmost importance in producing and securing economic growth,
especially when urban amenities are key in attract such people (Glaeser et al., 2001). Regardless
of the argument in both creative class and human capital bodies of literature, the argument of the
two terms still remains the same; highly-skilled and educated workers strongly influence urban
and regional economic growth. In attracting such individuals, the supply of attractive spaces
becomes ever more important. Where do creatives locate and live? Where are highly-skilled
and educated works going to want to live?

Today, new building developments or new-builds are common features in the urban
landscape because they are new and attractive options. Such developments are frequently
debated as to whether they “count” or classify as components to gentrification processes
(Davidson & Lees, 2005, 2010). New-build gentrification is a process conducted not by
homeowners, but developers - that contrasts from earlier processes rehabilitating old industrial
sites (Zukin, 1982) - where “large, newly constructed apartment complexes and luxury
residential estates” are deployed across the urban landscape (Davidson & Lees, 2005). Argued
to be examples of a gentrified landscape with wealthy developers acting as the gentry, Shaw (2002) sees the building of and the investment in new upscale apartments, which dominate urban blocks, to share similarities with gentrification processes that take place through the rehabilitation of old homes. Similar cases for new-build ‘gentrification’ include the fact that new expensive apartments and houses in central cities are specifically marketed towards high-earning affluent professionals (Davidson & Lees, 2005). Using this point helps further conceptualize and place new urban development within neoliberal urban strategy (Zimmerman, 2008), where new-building developments - and more specifically - new urbanist infill developments are designed and used for young professionals and affluent creatives who can afford to purchase growing rents. Through the production of buildings that increase the density of areas, more people who demand urban living and centrality can, nonetheless, be supplied with a product. This process further strengthens downtown property-led development as a development strategy.

With the sheer size of the Millennials being around 75 million, as well as their consumption and travel patterns being differentiated from previous generations, policymakers and planners face important decisions in shaping cities in order to meet the demands of this cohort (McDonald, 2015), demonstrating the cohorts’ role in the economy and in shaping policy (Burstein, 2013). However, city governments should not bear all the weight. It should be recognized that with growing urban demands for urban living (Edlund et al., 2015), developers may play crucial roles in additionally shaping cities and accommodating the needs of their “customers”, potentially through the creation of new urban developments.

Through these development processes, declining urban centers build and develop around key assets like higher education and medical institutions (Adams, 2008; Silverman, Yin, & Patterson, 2015; Shibley et al., 2016). Frequently paired together, “eds and meds” - or rather -
universities and medical campuses, not only cluster the very people (young professionals and creative class) that policymakers are trying to attract to improve their economy, but also allow spillovers from their knowledge and presence to occur in other high-tech industries (Lucas, 1988; Anselin et al., 1997). However, it should be recognized that these spillover processes do not necessarily benefit everyone; they sometimes cause negative externalities. As with gentrification, developing through anchor institutions - like medical and high-tech industries - can have negative effects on surrounding areas possibly through limited community input, encroachment on neighboring residential properties, or even residential displacement (Silverman et al., 2014, 2015). Such development around “eds and meds” display that socio-economic ramifications and outcomes can occur.

Other tools, such as historic tax credits (Vonesh, 2015), partnerships (Adair et al., 2000; Espinosa & Hernandez, 2015), marketing, as well as many others suggested by Sager (2011) have been used within the entrepreneurial, neoliberal city for numerous purposes including: building development, enhancement, brownfield remediation, residential and commercial property rehabilitation, and community organization. Urban redevelopment can be seen through government fiscal policies (TIF, tax abatements, grants), urban planning (place marketing and branding, visioning), as well as specific planning theories such as new urbanism, smart growth, traditional neighborhood design, and sustainable neighborhood design. All of these development tools can have spatial outcomes as a result of their implementation.

**Urban Villages**

One such example in response to urban change and urban entrepreneurialism, is the formation of urban villages. The term of the “urban village” can be traced back to the work of urban sociologist Herbert Gans. In 1962, Gans published “Urban Villagers” – a piece that
discussed the social and neighborhood components of Boston’s West End neighborhood. The study examined – then – a predominantly Italian-American community where Gans described them as “urban villagers” who resembled and shared similar social structures to those found in rural villages and small-towns (Gans, 1982). Boston’s West End, at the time, was socially mixed and diverse, contained shops, and a variety of housing options (houses, apartments, and lofts).

Contrary to Gans’ (1962) examination of the social networks and makeup of Boston’s West End, the urban village concept today is much more different. Within this study’s context, urban villages are a planning concept for how urban neighborhoods should be styled and designed, where they are developed through planning, place marketing and branding strategies (Neal, 2003; Bell & Jayne, 2004; Barnes et al., 2006). If anything, the concept draws upon the mixed-use nature of the West End neighborhood describe in Gans (1962) than the actual societal makeup of the neighborhood. These strategies can be created through local, neighborhood governance, or through policymakers on the city level. Initially developed by the Urban Village Group (UVG) in the 1980s (Aldous, 1992), the concept is unrelated to the contemporary urban village phenomenon in China where, as a result of rapid urbanization and urban expansion, former rural villages become engulfed by expanding cities (Chung, 2010). The urban village in this study is within the westernized context of an urban neighborhood where it takes the style, planning, and branding of a village, which is seen in the United Kingdom, and parts of the United States, like Phoenix (see Pickus & Gober, 1988) and Seattle (see Gover, 2015).

The notion of an urban village is very much an oxymoron. Villages have historically been associated and connected to the rural end of the urban-rural spectrum, and to place a village within a city is apparently contradictory. A dialectic between villages and cities can appear, just as we do with small towns and cities (Jakle, 1999), where cities are often seen as large, complex,
alienating, cold, and small-towns are more of the opposite. Such qualities that are found in small-towns are also applicable to villages, and can be drawn upon by planners, policymakers, and branding and marketing agencies in order to develop a particular urban backbone that bridges the gap between city and village characteristics. Moreover, the urban village provides a form of our built environment that creates a particular image of a neighborhood with distinction and uniqueness that stretches beyond the scale of the rural village (Neal, 2003).

Today, those very components and characteristics of Boston’s West End years ago, as well as the mixed-use forms seen in main streets of small-towns and villages, are being adopted by many cities and neighborhoods in the United States that are attempting to focus on urban redevelopment. These strategies typically focus upon increasing density, establishing mixed-use development, and having proximate location to urban amenities. The past couple decades have seen these strategies come about due to its increased practice in urban planning. Urban village practice has been put in place in order to redevelop and create new neighborhoods that embrace a multitude of urban planning practices (Neal, 2003).

Based on their planning, urban villages are distinct social and cultural areas that exist within cities, offering residents a particular urban lifestyle (Bell & Jayne, 2004; Pollard, 2004). Biddulph et al., (2002) suggest that there exists an increased need to investigate urban village, especially in conjunction with new urbanism and traditional neighborhood development (TND). The planning concept of the urban village was developed in the late 1980s as an approach to create successful neighborhoods at the height of economic restructuring of cities (Neal, 2003). It had emerged through successful planning principles drawn from new urbanism. Through this urban planning practice, the urban village has emphasized the increase use of mixed-use
developments, improved land-use, and the redevelopment of declining urban areas, where many of the people living within urban villages are upper class.

The urban village concept, as suggested by Aldous (1992) provides six key characteristics of urban villages: small size; mix of land uses; maximum possible self-sufficiency; socio-economic conditions; available transportation and urban design; and strong management. Many of these characteristics suggested by Aldous (1992) can be found within the built-environments of former inner-city commercial streets that thrived in the past. Urban villages differentiate themselves in that they are often prescribed forms of urban development.

Research on the evolution of commercial strips and commercial streets has been found primarily within cultural and urban geography, as well as urban history and urban studies. In their case study on University Avenue, in Champaign and Urbana, Illinois, Jakle & Mattson (1981) examine changes in commercial space over time. Through their research they find that the University Avenue’s evolution can be attributed to changes in social dynamics, as well as collective and individual decision-making processes across private and public interests. Further research on urban commercial streets has specifically looked into economic and social changes, like gentrification, (Bridge & Dowling, 2001; Hankins, 2002; Grant & Gregory, 2015), historical demographic change (Roth & Grant, 2015), as well as the developmental changes in mixtures of retail composition between local and chain stores through (Litvin & Jaffe, 2010; Litvin & DiForio, 2014).

With strategies pushing for developing urban streets and neighborhoods, walkability, mixed-usage, and urban infill need to be factored in. Research on the economic impact of walkable streets and new urbanist design has been conducted, as well as discussion on the social implications for places drawing on such practices. New Urbanist design principles include the
following: walkability (pedestrian-friendly streetscape; connectivity (interconnected street network); mixed-use & diversity (mix of shops, residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, and diversity of people); mixed housing (range of housing types, sizes, and prices); quality architecture & urban design (design helps create a sense of place, scale with surrounding architecture is intact); traditional neighborhood structure (transect planning); increased density (more buildings, shops, and people together); green transportation (pedestrian-friendly design, use of trains); sustainability (more walking, less driving, and minimal environmental impact of development); quality of life (Urbanism Principles). These components have led to discussion on implications, specifically in planning, new urbanism seen an ongoing scholarly debate (Katz et al., 1994; Day, 2003; Talen, 1999, 2005). While this research has specifically focused on planning implications of new urbanism, little research has examined the ways in which new urbanism design principles, and the incorporation of new urbanist infill construction has an economic and social effect on their surroundings.

Empirical research has indicated that walkability and new urbanist developments have positive economic effects. Research on walkability has illustrated that environments with more pedestrian-friendly built-environments increase property values for office, retail and apartment spaces (Pivo & Fisher, 2011). More recently, walkability has been found to supply economic benefits to homeowners of neighboring single-family residential property values (Li et al., 2015). In conjunction with walkability, new urbanism form has shown that residents are willing to pay greater premiums for houses in neighborhoods greater street network connectivity; more streets; and better pedestrian access to mixed-uses (Tu & Eppli, 1999; Song & Gnapp, 2003, 2004). Within the context of a Rust Belt city, research using agent-based simulation on Buffalo’s walkability has indicated that Elmwood is a “walkable” neighborhood (Yin, 2013). Further
literature in the Rust Belt has looked at the construction of new housing in Cleveland, where it was found to have a positive effect on surrounding housing values. However, growth of businesses and mixing of land-use around new housing builds was also suggested to have negative outcomes and effects (Ding & Knaap, 2002).

Ultimately, this wide body of literature has led me to investigate how the Elmwood neighborhood in Buffalo, NY has evolved since 1990, through the examination of spatial processes. Many cities have experienced decline, as well as returns of people to central areas within cities, but how do those factors play out in a Rust Belt city? How have urban neighborhoods in places like Buffalo changed for the better? In addition, the literature has further lead me to examine the spatial outcomes and contemporary conditions of past processes. Such questions have lead me to investigate the Elmwood neighborhood.
Chapter 3

Methodology

In this thesis, I take an historical approach in order to address my research questions on the Elmwood Village’s evolution. Given the concept of evolving commercial districts presented by Roth & Grant (2015), I ask broadly how and why has the Elmwood neighborhood in Buffalo evolved into one of Buffalo’s more successful neighborhoods, even as the rest of the city stagnated. Asking these question allows for not only building upon the historical geographies of inner-city commercial streets, but also by examining changes in demographics – and policies - amidst a new urban-suburban paradigm shift in urban planning. Cities and streets evolve and shape policy based on growing trends in urban living and Millennial population.

This research utilized the exploratory case study method to address my questions. Past work on commercial street metamorphosis used the case study method drawing upon qualitative data, such as historical archives and plans, (Roth & Grant, 2015), as well as quantitative historical census data (Grant & Gregory, 2015). Through the incorporation of both qualitative (newspapers, policy documents) and quantitative data (census data), I utilized a mixed-methods approach to my research questions in order to fully assess the spatial outcomes of spatial processes in Elmwood’s evolution, merging the methodological work established by Roth & Grant (2015) and Grant & Gregory (2015).

To more fully understand spatial processes and outcomes in urban redevelopment schemes within the context of a Rust Belt city, I chose to study Elmwood Village, as it is centrally located in Buffalo, NY. I utilized the case study method in order to answer my
questions. A case study is an in-depth investigation of a current phenomenon or “case” (Yin, 2013, p. 16). This method is designed to increase understanding about the “how” and “why” of social phenomenon, and is the preferred method in studying contemporary events and processes (Yin, 2013). It further allowed me to explore and investigate both the historical and contemporary spatial processes and outcomes that Elmwood Village has experienced since 1990.

Ultimately, I focused on the processes of Elmwood Village’s evolution since 1990, and the spatial – both economic and social – outcomes of its redevelopment. These topics, in addition to my literature review, served as a guide to the overall case study, and in the creation of an interview protocol, and codebook which were both used as lead during the in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with informants across three groups: community members, government officials, as well as and individuals working in real estate and development in the Elmwood Village area.

This case study explores the evolution from the “Elmwood Strip” into the “Elmwood Village” and investigates whether this process was due to partnerships between institutions or actors as well as what development tools and policies were used to spur its redevelopment. Current processes and new urbanist infill projects are also examined to determine why Elmwood has experienced such changes over the last twenty-five years and explain why it matters to the greater Rust Belt region. Latent content analysis, upon a number of qualitative data sets such as interview transcripts, policy documents, and archival newspaper and blogs, was employed to garner these results.

Content analysis, broadly, is a technique for making replicable inferences from textual data. It can be utilized for the interpretation of texts and textual meanings (Krippendorf, 2012). It is an approach to the analysis of qualitative material, where it “views data not as physical
events but as texts, images, and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings” (Krippendorf, 2012, p. xii). Content analysis consists of two forms, manifest and latent analysis. Manifest content analysis is an objective and systematic form of content analysis where analysis is quantitative. It allows for the examination of surface content of a transcript, newspaper, or other form of text, and records how many times a particular word or phrase is used in the text (Hay, 2000). Latent content, on the other hand, is much more subjective. It allows for the underlying meaning within the physical text to come about (Hay, 2000). An example of latent content analysis could be a policymaker talking about an expanding medical campus in relation to a city’s economic development. While manifest would simply code as “development tool” or “eds & meds” depending on your codebook, latent content analysis allows for more understanding of the process than just a word count (n=1) for that phrase.

Content analysis allows large amounts of qualitative information, whether it is generated from interviews or textual sources, “to be reduced down to a more manageable form” (Smith, 2000, p. 314). Reduction can retain the qualitative characteristics of the information, or may also be developed and transformed into quantitative material, such as keyword frequencies, such as found in manifest content analysis. When the qualitative characteristics of the qualitative data are preserved, coding ensues.

Coding, is the process wherein an individual records, transcribes, or codes field observations, thoughts, and readings of texts. It is a process where individuals create data, just as a measuring instrument, like a thermometer, produces data for researchers to analyze in the natural sciences. While I did not perform any statistical or correlational procedures on the texts, I did use interpretation through latent content analysis. This method allowed for information to
“come out” of the data that may not have otherwise been accessible through other means (Smith, 2000). In addition, a codebook was generated for reliability and replicability of the study (MacQueen et al., 1998).

Policy documents, like the New York State Historic and Mixed-Use Tax incentives and Buffalo’s proposed Buffalo Development Ordinance (Buffalo Green Code), were interpreted through the use of narrative policy analysis (Roe, 1994). Narrative policy analysis provides a procedure that allows for a breakdown and interpretation of policy in order to expose differences and issues within it. It ultimately identifies what issues are at stake and their possible causes.

The spatial processes and outcomes of Elmwood’s evolution are also addressed – specifically in terms of their social and economic successes or lack thereof. As it relates, shifts in demographics, Millennials’ flux in and out of the area and people’s perception of gentrification are also considered. Latent content analysis on qualitative data is employed while quantitative U.S. Census data is used primarily for descriptive statistical purposes.

**Data Collection**

Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with informants across three groups: community members, government officials, as well as individuals working in real estate and development in the Elmwood Village area, and more broadly Buffalo, NY. In addition, archival newspapers, blogs, and U.S. Census data were collected for triangulation purposes. This typology of informants was created in order to get multiple points-of-view on both the historical and contemporary phenomenon occurring in Elmwood Village. Although dated, Smith’s (1979) key work presents an important argument on urban phenomenon, where – in his case – gentrification is much too complex phenomenon to only gather the point of view of
one group (gentry), and to do so limits the scope and understanding of the process.

Gentrification does not only involve the acts of the gentry, but also those of developers, landlords, mortgage lenders, government agencies, real estate agents, and tenants. Leaving such accounts out of gentrification research is deemed “excessively narrow” and lacking (Smith, 1979, p. 540). Other literature has also suggested developers’ roles in economic and social change of urban landscapes (Davidson & Lees, 2005, 2010). For these reasons, I created three categories of informants in my investigation in order to get a variety of views from multiple scales – both neighborhood and city – and to gain knowledge from both the historical and contemporary urban phenomenon in the Elmwood Village.

By using multiple data sources, I was able to better validate my findings through triangulation. Triangulation is a procedure that establishes validity by searching for convergence among data collected from different sources (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Through this process, multiple forms of data are able to provide evidence on a particular theme or topic, rather than one single form of data or incident point doing so in the study. Additional validation and reliability checks were conducted through member checking procedures. Two member checks were conducted with two key informants during the spring of 2016. Member checking is a process that establishes credibility. Unlike triangulation, member checking is a procedure that places validity procedures upon the informant, where they comment on the accuracy on the researcher’s interpretations, transcriptions, codes, and written narratives (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted over the phone and in-person in the summer and fall of 2015 with informants (20-118 minutes; mean = 39 minutes; median = 34 minutes). These informants (n=19) were purposefully selected and placed in one of three key stakeholder categories: community members either living the Elmwood Village or its
surrounding neighborhoods, government officials, and developers and real estate agents in the area. Many of them (13 out of 19) held an active social and economic stake in the neighborhood through homeownership, property ownership, business ownership.

Stakeholders were asked to describe the history of the Elmwood Village from 1990 to present day via an interview protocol. The interview protocol’s questions (Appendix D) included themes on 1) thoughts on social and economic change 2) roles of community groups, the city, and developers 3) processes and conflicts during recent development projects 4) thoughts on the soon-to-be citywide zoning code (*Buffalo Green Code, 2015*). They were also asked to describe their perceptions on a number of topics including: new mixed-use development buildings, social and economic change in the area over time, and the implementation of the Buffalo Green Code. The informants were also asked to comment on the outcomes of the redevelopment of the Elmwood Village and its role and relationship to other urban areas. Probes were utilized to elicit information from informants. Interviews were transcribed and coded using QSR NVivo 10 qualitative analysis software (QSR International, 2010). Transcripts were coded inductively for emergent themes.

The semi-structured interview followed a purposive, snowball sampling technique in order to gain informants. The snowball sampling technique, sometimes referred to as chain referral sampling, is a method that proceeds from a seed informant to suggest possible subsequent informants via social networks (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This snowball sampling technique typically begins with a key informant who is chosen due to their knowledge and accessibility to a particular area of interest.

In this sense a key informant or seed within each group (community, government, and real estate/developers) was contacted. The seeds were contacted and approached via email due to:
their experience in the real estate market in the Elmwood area, familiarity and residence in the area, and presence in a number of archival newspapers from my preliminary research. The seed informants provided a number of contacts that I approached and also interviewed. Following each individual interview, a question was asked to further provide other possible individuals I could contact for interviews.

Archival research included the search of newspaper and blog articles. *Buffalo News* articles were collected from both the Downtown Buffalo Public Library and its website. This online database only consisted of newspaper articles between 1989 to present day. Key word search terms were established for this study based on my research questions and from preliminary research. Key terms were also utilized to allow for replicability. The key terms established included: “Elmwood,” “Elmwood Strip,” “Elmwood Village,” “Forever Elmwood,” “Elmwood Village Association,” “Elmwood Village Design Standards,” “Karl Frizlen,” and “Buffalo Green Code”. Articles from these key word searches were gathered. The *Buffalo News* provides real estate transaction articles across all municipalities in Erie County. These newspaper articles were eliminated from data collection when using the “Elmwood” search term.

Other material gathered from the Downtown Buffalo Public Library included archival marketing and planning material for Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association. These documents were photographed and stored in a database.

Blog articles from *Buffalo Rising Online* were collected using the same key word search terms used for the newspaper sources. *Buffalo Rising Online* was launched in 2004 that stemmed from a print magazine called *Explore Elmwood-Allentown Village* that began in 1997. The *Explore Elmwood-Allentown Village* magazine discussed living, dining, shopping and recreation within the Elmwood area. Once it was converted to an online format, the magazine expanded its
scope to cover the whole city of Buffalo and its various neighborhoods; not just the Elmwood area. Today *Buffalo Rising* discusses a myriad of topics including new building developments (mixed-use, urban infill, adaptive reuse), grassroots organizations, art, music, retail, and other topics specific to the Elmwood Village and the City of Buffalo as a whole. The online magazine’s editor and writers are both Elmwood Village and West Side residents.

*Buffalo Courier-Express* newspapers and photographs were also collected at the E.H. Butler Library archives at the State University of New York College at Buffalo. The library’s archives are sourced by topics keyword or phrase, such as “Elmwood Avenue” or “Elmwood Strip.” The archives include”, “Elmwood Strip,” or “Elmwood Businessmen’s Association.” These archives included newspaper clippings from the *Buffalo Courier-Express* from the late 1950’s up to September 19, 1982 (the media outlet’s last issue). These archives were used to bridge the historical gap prior to the late 1980s that the *Buffalo News* online database lacks.

Policy documents were also collected during the archival portion of my research. They were utilized to triangulate not only the government informants’ information from the interviews, but also those from community and real estate/developers informants. The documents collected provided additional information regarding important spatial processes and outcomes on recent policies, developments, and projects that have been occurring in the Elmwood area. The documents gathered included: The *Elmwood Village Design Standards* (codified in 2009), the *Buffalo Unified Development Ordinance (Buffalo Green Code) drafts* (2013, 2015), New York Real Property Tax Law 485-a (2002) and 421-i (2006). Other supplemental documents such as the online version of the *City of Buffalo Zoning Codes* were also examined.
Quantitative data from both the U.S. Census Bureau and the City of Buffalo was collected. U.S. Census data was collected via Kent State’s map library’s subscription with Geolytics from the 1970-2010 U.S. Census years. Data on population, age, employment, education, income, and housing was gathered. The data was gathered for multiple geographic scales including Erie County, the City of Buffalo, the census tracts that overlap the Elmwood Village area (62.01, 63.01, 63.02, 65.01, 169, 66.01, 66.02, 67.01, 67.02), and those that encompass the West Side (171, 61, 69.01, 69.02). Property parcel data from the City of Buffalo’s GIS department was collected as well. This data included shapefiles on property parcels from in Erie County and those within the City of Buffalo from 2014. The information gained from this data collection will be purely for descriptive purposes.

**Data Organization**

Data was organized through both Microsoft Excel and QSR NVivo 10 qualitative software (QSR International, 2010). Newspaper and blog articles collected were organized in individual Excel spreadsheets. Metadata – including title, author, publishing date, and URL – was collected and noted within the spreadsheets. File names for each individual article were denoted by its date (year, month, day, and source) format. For example, a *Buffalo News* article published on July 11, 2015 was given a file name of “2015.07.11_BN”. *Buffalo Rising* articles were denoted with the suffix of “_BR” and *Buffalo Business First* articles were denoted with the suffix of “_BBF”. Articles published on the same date were differentiated by adding letters to the end of the date portion of the file name starting at the letter “a” and continued onto “b”, and so on and so forth. The articles were copied and created into Microsoft Word documents. These documents were then stored in a secure, password encrypted folder that only the co-investigator had access to.
Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews was also organized through Microsoft Excel and QSR NVivo 10 qualitative software (QSR International, 2010). Metadata gathered from the interviews was organized in Microsoft excel. The metadata included the following: name of the informant; informant classification (community member, government official, real estate/developer); date of interview(s); file name; whether or not the informant has been interviewed before; length of the interview(s); location of the interview; type of interview (in-person, phone, email); age; job position; place of employment; past or present position of relevance to this study; time lived in Buffalo; and place of residency. Audio recordings from the interviews were collected and organized in a folder based on their date (year, month, day, and interview number).

**Limitations**

An important limitation in my case study was defining the boundaries of Elmwood Village for the purposes of collecting historical U.S. Census data. Through the examination of both professional and popular maps produced by planners, Forever Elmwood, the Elmwood Village Association, and through conversation, I define Elmwood Village as being the area from North Street up to Forest Avenue, and bounded to the west by Richmond Avenue and to the east by Delaware Avenue. This area, I argue, also includes the Buffalo State College campus, the H.H. Richardson Complex, the Burchfield Penney Art Center, as well as the Albright Knox Art Gallery since they are educational and cultural institutions frequently tied to the neighborhood.

Limitations to my study arose when gathering historical census data (Figure 3.1). The most convenient and practical way for me to gather historical census data between 1970 to present day was through Geolytics, Inc. and the U.S. Census. However, limitations arose due to the fact that the census data was available on census tract level geography. I experienced an
issue in defining the neighborhood’s boundaries on this level. No census tract completely covers Elmwood Village, based on my definitions. From 1970 to 2000, I defined “Elmwood Village” as Erie County tracts 62.01, 63.01, 63.02, 64, 65.01, 65.02, 66.01, 66.02, 67.01, and 67.02. For 2010, I defined “Elmwood Village” as 62.01, 63.01, 63.02, 65.01, 66.01, 66.02, 67.01, 67.02, and 169. The preferred geographic level would be through the use of the 14222 zip code; however, doing so would cause difficulties in comparing and contrasting historical trends.

Another limitation in this case study, specifically on the topic of gentrification, involves census tract level data. With the process being represented as “moving west of Richmond” or “changing the boundaries,” making assumptions on trends in displacement and property values would be difficult at the census tract level geography based on the tract boundaries. Richmond Avenue has long represented a clear-cut boundary between the West Side of Buffalo and the Elmwood Village, where a drop-off in property values occurs. Using the current census tract

Figure 3.1. Geographic Limitations (Elmwood Village in dark grey)
geography does not include Richmond as a boundary, which is more in line with the western portion of the 14222 zip code boundary.

Other limitations arose while gathering qualitative data. Issues in the length of interviews, for instance, occurred with a range from 20 to 118 minutes, and an average interview length of about 39 minutes. The distribution of interview length certainly has effects on counts of data that were overly represented by repetitions. However, the two informants with the longest interviews were the oldest and had been involved in the area the longest, so they spoke more on the history of the neighborhood and filled in gaps that younger informants could not.

Additionally, the historical approach of my research and large time period being examined, caused several issues involving informants’ memory. A number of responses had to be checked through the triangulation of data. A couple of informants were asked to check interpretations of data, as well as conflicting information in order to establish valid results in the spring of 2016. Chain referral, or snowball sampling, although retains informants who has a knowledge on the research topic, could also be restrictive in that your sample is biased by being in the same social network. I attempted to resolve this limitation by creating three groups of informants: community members, city government, and developers and real estate agents.

By using a historical and mixed-methods approach, I utilized an exploratory case study on the Elmwood Village to investigate the evolution of an urban commercial street in a Rust Belt city. I gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from a number of sources: interview transcripts, archival news media, and U.S. Census data. Coding and content analysis ensued on qualitative data, while themes drawn from qualitative analysis were used to further direct the quantitative data to be examined.
Chapter 4

A Historical Geography of the Elmwood Village

This chapter explores the historical geography of the Elmwood Village. Specifically, it investigates the neighborhood’s trajectory from Buffalo’s early history and Elmwood’s development as a streetcar suburb at the beginning of the 20th century up to its current state. Throughout the discussion, Elmwood Avenue’s decline is presented as a result of broad economic and social spatial processes such as deindustrialization, suburbanization, and white flight. Moving towards the end of the millennium, the chapter covers Elmwood’s tipping point in the 1990s and its return back into a strong, successful urban commercial street of the early 2000s. Emanating from work by the business and residential organization Forever Elmwood, the neighborhood transformed through a number of means including: an altering of the built environment, streetscape and beautification projects, and branding and marketing programs through grants. Such development tools are vital in understanding the neighborhoods transformation.

Though research on commercial street redevelopment and evolution is not new in the field of geography (Jakle, 1981; Hankins, 2002; Miller & Olberding, 2014; Grant & Gregory, 2015; Roth & Grant, 2015), the Elmwood Village represents an important historical geography of urban commercial strip redevelopment amidst a broader urban-suburban shift. Thus, Elmwood provides an opportune case study as current local redevelopment schemes and zoning changes are occurring throughout Buffalo, NY. This evolution and metamorphosis is explored through an examination of historical and spatial processes.
Early Elmwood and Buffalo

Buffalo, NY, located on the northeastern shores of Lake Erie, at the head of the Niagara River, was incorporated as a city in 1832. Situated between the agricultural heartland of the Midwest and the major metropolitan centers of the East, the city was built through the grain and steel industries. At the turn of the 20th century, Buffalo ranked 8th among all American cities in total population (352,387 people) – a greater population than 2016.

During Buffalo’s early development as an industrial city, the area where the Elmwood Village exists today was increasingly populated by urban elites who sought to escape and distance themselves from the city’s congestion and pollution. As a result, these individuals expanded the city’s reaches by building elaborate houses on large parcels of land (Goldman, 1983). This area where they built their homes – located immediately east of Elmwood Avenue – is known as “Millionaires’ Row,” and it is still home to the elaborate mansions that were constructed during the beginnings of Buffalo’s 20th century expansion. Thus, the plethora of affluent individuals moving into the area and the construction of distinct homes helped to establish Elmwood Avenue and neighboring Delaware Avenue as a prominent and desirable area to live in Buffalo.

While the city expanded outward, the new sections of Buffalo that were home to the elite became very popular among the urban middle class who could afford to move out of the congested and industrialized city (Goldman, 1983). This dispersion of population became further possible in 1907, when Elmwood Avenue became a major transportation artery that stretched north from Buffalo’s center of commerce to Delaware Park. Around the time of the
Pan-American Exposition, the street and its surrounding area took form as a streetcar suburb (Figure 4.1), where the middle class could access goods and services from the many commercial and transportation opportunities available along the street corridor (Warner, 1978). Through the development of Elmwood Avenue and immediate area, large Victorian homes located on small lots were built on Elmwood’s side streets and became commonplace, creating the dense and historic neighborhood that we can still see today.

As Elmwood, Buffalo, and the rest of America moved further into the 20th century, the means of transportation changed. The emergence of the automobile and interstate highway system not only influenced how people moved about space but also how the American landscape changed (Meinig, 2004). Urban renewal projects illustrate transformations created for the automobile and suburbanite within the context of Buffalo (Graebner, 2007). At the same time, streetscapes and automobile strips were built on inexpensive land around suburban tract housing not for the pedestrian but for the car – ultimately creating a plethora of “Anytown, USAs” and a
“geography of nowhere” on the American landscape (Kunstler, 1993). These broad spatial changes ultimately influenced Elmwood Avenue moving forward into the mid-20th century.

**Elmwood’s Decline**

“Once a street of leaf-shaded beauty and urban sophistication...Elmwood soon transformed to one of urban seediness.” - Editorial, Buffalo News, November 24, 1994

The Elmwood neighborhood experienced the decline many Rust Belt inner-city neighborhoods faced during the latter half of the 20th century. The area’s decline, like others, was a product of broader spatial processes occurring throughout industrial cities of the north. For Buffalo, broadly, the early beginnings of decline occurred during the 1940s where areas outside the city began to develop. Such changes can be seen when between 1940 and 1950, the city only grew 0.7% compared to the entire metropolitan area’s growth of 13.6% (Table 4.1). Growth of the metropolitan areas outside the central cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls can be seen here, where city dwellers and dollars moved out of Buffalo, which ultimately influenced and changed the ways commercial streets operated and existed. With growth outside of the city occurring during the 1940s, subsequent population decline within the city occurred the following decade between 1950 and 1960, which further fueled an increase growth in the metropolitan area outside both Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 Percent Gain in Population, 1940-1968</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo Metropolitan Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Falls City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Area Outside these 2 Cities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: E.J. Fitzmorris, Buffalo Courier-Express, January 5, 1970

*1968 population estimates were made by the Courier-Express
In subsequent decades, white flight – or the move of white city residents to the suburbs due to the influx of minority races – additionally affected commercial streets of Rust Belt cities. More affluent than minority urban dwellers, these individuals pulled dollars out of the city and brought them to the suburbs. For Elmwood, white population dropped about 30% between 1980 and 2000, where Black and Hispanic populations rose about 77% and 380% respectively during the same period of time (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Elmwood’s Racial Composition, 1980-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elmwood Village</th>
<th>Buffalo, NY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Difference Percent</td>
<td>Total Difference Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>27,750</td>
<td>-2,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>29,754</td>
<td>-1,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>31,243</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>19,149</td>
<td>-4,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>24,076</td>
<td>-3,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>27,170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5,331</td>
<td>1,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>3,593</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,283</td>
<td>793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>1,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>475</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Along with suburbanization and white-flight, the composition of families in cities changed as well as a result of the fear of the city. For Elmwood and Buffalo, total families decreased by 24.8% and 22.7% respectively between 1970 and 1980 (Table 4.3.).
Table 4.3 Demographics, 1970-1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elmwood Village</th>
<th></th>
<th>Buffalo, NY</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>29,754</td>
<td>-1,489 -5.0%</td>
<td>328,123</td>
<td>-29,747 -8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>31,243</td>
<td>-4,678 -13.0%</td>
<td>357,870</td>
<td>-104,898 -22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>35,921</td>
<td></td>
<td>462,768</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5,391</td>
<td>-649 -10.7%</td>
<td>78,931</td>
<td>-8,780 -10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>6,040</td>
<td>-1,989 -24.8%</td>
<td>87,711</td>
<td>-25,692 -22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>8,029</td>
<td></td>
<td>113,403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 20-34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>10,058</td>
<td>-898 -8.2%</td>
<td>91,100</td>
<td>-3,089 -3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>10,956</td>
<td>2,038 22.9%</td>
<td>94,189</td>
<td>5,571 6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>8,918</td>
<td></td>
<td>88,618</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>14,138</td>
<td>-85 -0.6%</td>
<td>135,681</td>
<td>-5,154 -3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>14,223</td>
<td>174 1.2%</td>
<td>140,835</td>
<td>-17,104 -10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>14,049</td>
<td></td>
<td>157,939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Household Units</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>15,454</td>
<td>23 0.1%</td>
<td>152,089</td>
<td>-4,323 -2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>15,431</td>
<td>641 4.3%</td>
<td>156,412</td>
<td>-9,680 -5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>14,790</td>
<td></td>
<td>166,092</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Housing Units</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,299</td>
<td>81 6.6%</td>
<td>15,535</td>
<td>77 0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,218</td>
<td>477 64.3%</td>
<td>15,458</td>
<td>7,305 89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>741</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,153</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Occupied Housing Units</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4,216</td>
<td>61 1.5%</td>
<td>58,969</td>
<td>-3,749 -6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>4,155</td>
<td>-219 -5.0%</td>
<td>62,718</td>
<td>-7,146 -10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>4,374</td>
<td></td>
<td>69,864</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-Occupied Housing Units</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>9,939</td>
<td>-119 -1.2%</td>
<td>77,585</td>
<td>-651 -0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>10,058</td>
<td>383 4.0%</td>
<td>78,236</td>
<td>-9,839 -11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>9,675</td>
<td></td>
<td>88,075</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elmwood Avenue’s retail began to experience frequent turnover as a result of a diminished number of families and shoppers on the city’s streets (M. Attardo interview). With Elmwood Avenue’s traditional retail identity fading, the strip’s identifiable feature became its college bar scene and its neon lights (C. Battin & A. Koeppel, interview, August 11, 2015). The street’s transformation can be seen by a 22.9% increase in population for individuals aged 20 to 34 between 1970 and 1980, even while total population dropped 13% (Table 4.3).

This instability and fluctuation of the area’s demographics ultimately influenced the retail environment on the street and the area’s future dynamics. Such a diminished retail base experienced worsening conditions that had initially drove the city population out. Crime, drugs, and prostitution activity became more entrenched along the strip and continued into the early 2000s (Buffalo Police Department, 2001). These data from Elmwood and Buffalo provide insight into the characteristics of the area’s geography and history, where like many other commercial strips of Rust Belt cities during this time, saw both decline and changes in economic geographies.

The Rise of the Strip

Like other commercial strips across the United States during the early to mid-20th century, Elmwood was a strong and thriving commercial street. Initially, Elmwood’s identity was divided by Elmwood Avenue, which acted as a dividing line between the West and East Sides of Buffalo, dividing the surrounding neighborhoods by such. This West-East Side divided remained until the 1980s (H. Garrett, interview, October 27, 2015). From that time into the late 1990s, Buffalonians began referring to Elmwood Avenue colloquially as the “Elmwood Strip” for several reasons. Some were due to the changing urban landscape and demographics of the time; others were due to efforts made by the neighborhood institution, Forever Elmwood. These
changes were important in the area’s evolution because it caused the area to be recognized more as a suburban strip than an urban neighborhood that would be more inclusive and encompass both residents and businesses.

The origins of the Elmwood Strip name can be traced back to a community revitalization project in the early 1980s. In 1982, businesses along Elmwood Avenue attempted to link themselves together and to designate the area as a “place” through the use of dramatic neon lights stringed across storefronts. Such effort was an early place-based marketing strategy that attempted to attract shoppers to the street. A major feature of this project included a billboard at the north end of street at the corner of Bidwell Parkway and Elmwood Avenue featuring neon tango dancers (Figure 4.2), which have now since been torn down (Queenseyes, 2015). The project, designed by Laura Rankin along with Daniel Sack and Andy Ferullo, illuminated the streetscape at night, likening it to more bright and popular strips found throughout the U.S.

The Elmwood Strip name was also derived from the seedier and grungier components of the many bar and tattoo establishments along the street that contributed to the neighborhood’s “urban grit” (N. Nussbaumer, interview, November 11, 2015). Although recognized like many other commercial streets in Buffalo featuring small shops and stores, the Elmwood Strip was
often covered with college students from nearby Buffalo State College, Canisius College, and the University of Buffalo throughout the latter half of the 20th century (J.M. Reed, interview, November 19, 2015).

College students in the area would frequent the bars during the week and on the weekends, and as crucial patrons for the local bars, clubs, and taverns, students would partake in lewd behavior. This type of behavior resulted in a number of political issues, which arose due to conflicts between bar patrons, bar owners, and residents, who grew angry over broken beer bottles, public urination, noise and traffic (R. Meredith, interview, August 1, 2015). In attempts to solve these issues, Erie County Legislature proposed bars close at 3 a.m. instead of 4 a.m., which was only later squashed by Buffalo’s Council (Healy, 1975). Due to Elmwood’s emerging bar scene at the time, other issues such as crime and drug activity became commonplace. In addition to the linking neon lights and the dominant bar scene, the street’s use as a major thoroughfare also influenced the re-naming of Elmwood Avenue as the “Elmwood Strip.” During the suburbanization of Buffalo, Elmwood became an important street for suburbanites who had left the city, to commute to-and-from Downtown Buffalo for work (C. Battin & A. Koeppel, interview, August 11, 2015). Such transportation geography is not new, where infrastructure was often built to serve the needs of the suburban commuter (see Graebner, 2007). While retail was still an important aspect of the street, drivers would seldom stop and shop. Malls were the
preferred alternative and were Forever Elmwood’s biggest competition (M. Attardo, interview, September 27, 2015). At the time, there was simply greater demand by suburban commuters for fast moving streets than there was for slowing down to shop (C. Battin & A. Koeppel, interview).

Elmwood’s built environment was critical for the development of the “strip” name. The streetscape was utilized more so for the automobile than for the pedestrian window shopper (Figures 4.3 & 4.4). As such, during morning rush hours, Elmwood Avenue’s on-street parking was restricted on the west side of the street and would later switch restriction to the east side during evening rush hours to create an additional traffic lane for commuters (M. Attardo, interview; C. Battin & A. Koeppel, interview). This type of city planning, however, is not new. Jacobs (1961) discussed the issues stemming from the “mindless practice” of widening street beds and the narrowing of sidewalks. She suggests that, “The city is not the helper,” but “an antagonist of a street” – only to be left helpless without an active citizenry (Jacobs, 1961, p. 124). Such practices – alluding to urban renewal processes, though relevant throughout Elmwood’s development – at the time were thought to be strong plans by many government officials and city planners, where establishing better traffic flow into the downtown area would keep the city thriving. However, this was not the case. Urban renewal left citizens’ voices out of the equation, putting the cities apparent needs in front of their own.
Even prior to the street’s transformation and the city’s planning efforts, local business owners acknowledged that the “speeding” up of Elmwood would have perilous conditions to the retail environment of both Elmwood and other commercial streets throughout the city. One business owner during talks on the widening of Elmwood Avenue claimed that, “You are seeing our heads go under the guillotine. Yours will be next” (*Buffalo Courier-Express*, 1942). While warnings like this were spread to other commercial streets across the city, Elmwood and its businesses eventually saw the predicted decline as a result of such ill-planned city policy.

While Attardo and the work of Forever Elmwood helped clean-up the perception of the street, more effort was needed by both Forever Elmwood and the City of Buffalo in a joint-effort to remove the neighborhood’s seediness caused by crime and drug activity. Towards the late 1990s, downtown police efforts became tighter and more stringent on Chippewa Avenue – which is located a few miles south of Elmwood near downtown – where hot spots of prostitution were
located. As a result of the policing efforts, prostitutes began migrating north from Chippewa toward Elmwood Avenue, around North Street and Allentown and even to some portions near Forest Avenue (D. DiLinardo, conversation, November 18, 2015).

Through police efforts (Buffalo Police Department, 2001) and by legal means within Forever Elmwood, the neighborhood slowly pushed away from the conditions that caused other areas of the city vacant: economic decline, crime, and drugs. Following Michael Attardo’s resignation, a local resident and lawyer – Michael Ferdman – was voted Forever Elmwood’s president to take Attardo’s place. Inspired by Attardo’s previous work on Forever Elmwood, he and the board of directors for the institution wanted to build upon the infrastructure and programs that Attardo had established in continuing making the city better (Ferdman, interview, September 23, 2015). Through Ferdman’s efforts, a number of crime and quality-of-life issues were addressed through legal means.

As a lawyer, Michael Ferdman made several efforts to address the negative conditions occurring in Elmwood. During his tenure, he had combated a social-services agency, “Friends of the Night People”. The agency, which was located near Kleinhans Music Hall by North Street and Richmond Avenue, provided food, clothing, medical care, and counseling to the homeless. However, due to their location, the organization unintentionally altered and influenced the movement and migration patterns of the city’s homeless population to Elmwood and Allentown. Ferdman laments, “[They] were misbehaving, peeing on people’s lawns, committing small crimes, breaking and entering cars. Bad stuff was happening” (M. Ferdman, interview). His concerns over this issue were not because of “race,” but because it was slowly disassembling all of the efforts that Forever Elmwood and Michael Attardo had made in making Elmwood more attractive.
Other events that furthered the negative elements of the “strip” identity caused white homeowners to flee to the suburbs. Between 1990 and 2000, white population in Elmwood dropped by about 20 percent (Table 4.2). One informant remembered that people were moving out of the area during the late 1990s because they felt that the neighborhood was actually worsening and that they could do nothing about it. “There was one couple that was working tirelessly to try to push this back and at some point they gave up. They moved to Orchard Park and just said, ‘We can’t stand the city anymore. This is getting bad; crime is everywhere near us. We have to go’” (M. Ferdman, interview). Homeowners made many calls to the police and city officials, but nothing substantial was done. Elmwood’s “tipping point was near at that time” (Nussbaumer, interview). The very people who had managed to last this long in the city felt helpless (M. Ferdman, interview). Such conditions further represented the potential threat of a “tipping point” in Elmwood, which would result in the entire falling (Nussbaumer, interview).

Fear of living in Elmwood was further exacerbated by: the presence of a shelter for battered women that was frequented by abusive and screaming boyfriends; rooming houses with drug activity and violence; and decaying structures with landlords nowhere to be seen drawing down property values (M. Ferdman, interview). One respondent noted that, the issues causing Elmwood’s decline were being brought up at an organization’s meeting, which fueled Ferdman to sue an absentee landlord on the basis that his property was adversely affecting neighboring property values. Utilizing Forever Elmwood’s ability to act as an institution and voice for not only the businesses but also residential interests, Ferdman was able to bring to the table multiple interests and concerns to the court in order to address the roots of fear that were driving people from the neighborhood and city (M. Ferdman, interview).
While such instances further exemplify the ways in which inner-city neighborhoods throughout the many industrial cities of the Northeast were disassembled through suburbanization and white flight, they also show a shift from a traditional main street into one of suburban character. These changes affected the kinds of activity that occurred on the street, as well as the ways in which people perceived the area. Ultimately, these changes indicate that resiliency in an urban neighborhood in the Rust Belt occurred through the means of a neighborhood institution and organization around key actors, despite common perception of declining industrial cities.

The Return to Forever Elmwood: Advocates for the City

“Mall is a four-lettered word; Do the Strip.” – Forever Elmwood (1998)

Throughout its time, as a major center for commercial activity, Elmwood Avenue had institutions that acted collectively in order to improve the street’s economy. Prior to the early 1990s, the Elmwood Strip’s primary institution in organizing retail on the street was the Elmwood Businessmen’s Association (Haddad, 1980). The Elmwood Businessmen’s Association consisted of local business owners situated along Elmwood Avenue who organized themselves to improve the street’s business activity, which was plagued by deindustrialization and suburbanization. These occurrences led to a diminished number of people walking the streets and shopping, placing greater pressure on the Elmwood Businessmen’s Association to act (M. Attardo, interview). However, the association failed to address the problems of the street.
In the early 1990s, the neighborhood association held meetings to discuss issues and concerns among shop owners, their meetings lacked organization and unity and was characterized by frequent in-fighting between the older gentlemen running the meetings. “It was everybody basically screaming and yelling, and talking about all of the bad things that were happening. There was no problem solving. It was just a bitch fest. It was a downer. It was something that you just didn’t want to be a part of.” (N. Nussbaumer, interview). With a lack of unity and constructive problem solving by the Elmwood Businessmen’s Association, Michael Attardo, owner of a menswear store, Get Dressed, decided to steer the street and neighborhood’s structure in a different direction.

Through conversations with business owners and homeowners about the “unmistakable seediness” and deteriorating condition of the street, Attardo developed Forever Elmwood as a group of “sidewalk vigilantes” in the early 1990s, who put eyes on and brought feet to the street, through a number of urban clean-up and beautification projects (Buckham, 1994). Such projects included the organization in earning grants for spin-bins and flower baskets (Figures 4.6 & 4.7). Attardo, through his strong personality and charisma, was able to lead and bridge gaps between business owners and local residents (N. Nussbaumer, interview; M. Ferdman, interview), where in the past such communication lacked. Soon after the organization’s inception, the civic group gained further steam by incorporating as a non-profit, where its membership grew to a total of 75 people (Buckham, 1994). Such organization amidst urban decline in the Rust Belt, ultimately lead to a branding campaign that enabled Elmwood Avenue to buy time and stay afloat (Figure 4.5. Forever Elmwood’s logo)
This community organization further lead to stronger community ties and positive changes to a declining inner-city street in the Rust Belt, where it brought a strong base of social capital and local governance to the neighborhood that helped enable change.

Such change can be seen through Elmwood Avenue’s streetscape. Prior to Forever Elmwood’s formation, Elmwood Avenue’s design was neglected both in its physical and social makeup. The street was composed of: poor sidewalks, litter, crime, drug activity, panhandling, and prostitution that had made its way up north on the street, Elmwood was about to reach a “tipping point” (N. Nussbaumer, interview). The organization wanted to prevent these issues from further spreading to the surrounding residential streets. At the time, Attardo brought attention to the issues that were occurring in the neighborhood where, “The decay was obvious. So many streets have gone down the tube, and we didn’t want it happening here,” (Buckham, 1994). Seeing what was happening to other commercial streets in Buffalo and in other industrial cities, Forever Elmwood began putting forth concrete efforts, by building upon its physical assets first, like its street.

With Elmwood long representing one of the city’s key assets, Forever Elmwood’s job was to stop the dispersion and improve the area’s quality of life.
before a breaking point was reached. In partnership with the City of Buffalo, Forever Elmwood was able to complete a number of built environment projects that enhanced the urban infrastructure.

Such projects came about only through a realization following the past years of economic drain on the street. This realization came about through Michael Attardo – an Elmwood Avenue business owner – as he revisited the city policy and plans that allowed Elmwood to be a fast-moving thoroughfare. Based around an “urban philosophy, like Jane Jacobs,” Attardo wanted to invest time and money into the streetscape and make the built environment more pedestrian-friendly, which he believed would be conducive for shopping and recreation, and less friendly for automobile by passers (Attardo, interview). This philosophy of Attardo and Forever Elmwood – a business and neighborhood institution - was eventually put in action through the narrowing of Elmwood Avenue’s street bed and the widening of the street’s sidewalks (Figure 4.8). This project, in particular, was vital in transforming the economic geography of the street, in which it put businesses in a position to succeed and concretely improved the walkability of the street. One informant noted that Attardo’s strong leadership, enthusiasm, and desire to improve the area and the residents’ quality of life inspired others to take part in the efforts and join Forever Elmwood’s.
Attardo’s childhood friendship with city mayor Anthony Masiello helped enable the organization gain political clout and city funds to narrow and resurface the street bed of Elmwood Avenue from Utica to Delavan Avenue, as well as widen the sidewalks. Michael Ferdman, the organization’s second president, saw this event as “the marrying of the built environment, connecting the people with the resources,” ultimately providing people a pedestrian-friendly street (M. Ferdman, interview). These changes in the physical makeup of the street were key in that they further allowed the community’s voice to be heard in a physical form. Forever Elmwood “gave people a vehicle to say, ‘I
want to make my city better,’” through community dialogue and grassroots participation (M. Ferdman, interview). Such changes and efforts further display specific efforts in how inner-city neighborhoods stayed afloat amidst decline in the Rust Belt.

In addition to Elmwood Avenue’s streetscape transformation, Forever Elmwood was also a key factor in branding and marketing Elmwood as a place and shopping destination. In 1997, the organization obtained a $32,600 grant from the city. This grant helped the organization acquire a bus (Figure 4.10) for shoppers to use for transportation connecting downtown to Elmwood Avenue and make print promotional materials (Dolan, 1997). The bus schedule pamphlet illustrates how Forever Elmwood attempted to bring customers to the street during the holiday season, while also institutionalizing the “strip” name (Figure 4.9).

From this 1997 grant, Forever Elmwood created the slogan, “Mall is a four-lettered word; Do the strip.” The idea behind the campaign was to not only create more foot traffic on the street, but to also create Elmwood as a unique place – one that was unavailable in a suburban landscape dominated by malls and subdivisions (Collison, 1998; M. Attardo, interview). The campaign included print promotional materials, like the “Do the Strip” brochure, which was spread across the city in business establishments and at the city’s downtown convention center (Figure 4.11). This brochure was crucial in that it not only further institutionalized the “strip” name, but also provided people with a map listing the commercial enterprises along Elmwood Avenue.
marketing Elmwood as a destination by placing it on a map. Forever Elmwood at the time, had made the necessary improvements to the street’s physical makeup, they just needed to bring people outside the city back to it (Ferdman, interview). Through such material, Forever Elmwood was able to market the locations of the many urban amenities that the area and street had to offer including: retail, food, and services (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. “Do the Strip” - The top-right image, under How to Use This Resource, reads: “Listed below are some of the finest retailers, service providers and restaurants in Western New York. To find their locations, match the letters listed next to the names with the letters that correspond to the blocks on the Elmwood Avenue Strip.”
While fear of the city existed from outside and within, the investment in the built environment, clean-up, beautification, and raising of grants for Elmwood, significantly influenced the neighborhood today. Ultimately, the rise and conceptualization of Elmwood as the Elmwood Strip is important because it illustrates a shift from a traditional main street setting to one of a suburban commercial street dominated by the automobile, a college bar culture, and crime. These changes in Elmwood caused the suburban strip name to be entrenched. With suburbanization and sprawl occurring outside the city, Forever Elmwood had to market and brand Elmwood in a way that would compete with the normative malls of the suburbs, which were often along suburb strips, while simultaneously dealing with the ironic Elmwood “Strip” name.

From Elmwood’s development in the 1990s, we can see how Elmwood exemplifies what so many urban neighborhoods have gone through. Roth & Grant (2015) provides an evolutionary outline that is shared by many, if not nearly all, urban streets over time: decline and revitalization. For their case in Halifax, Gottingen Street saw: commercial decline postwar, stigmatized and impoverished space through the 1990s, and is eventually followed by gentrification. While this trajectory is not unique whatsoever, the broader conditions that occurred in Elmwood help further typify such urban transformations, while simultaneously placing itself as a case within the Rust Belt and an example of a revitalization practice.

Moving forward, Forever Elmwood, and eventually its modern-day form of the Elmwood Village Association helped produce the area we now know as the Elmwood Village. Building on Forever Elmwood, I describe the neighborhood’s evolution into the “Elmwood Village” in the next chapter.
Chapter 5

Entrepreneurial Elmwood: Branding the Village

*You know a strip – you think of a long, linear, straight line. A village you think of a fleshed out, square, or three-dimensional shape.* – Judith Frizlen

This chapter explores the contemporary geography of the Elmwood Village. Specifically, it investigates the contemporary birth and rise of the Elmwood Village and describes how changing demographics and urban design policy have changed Elmwood’s contemporary space. Further discussion of Elmwood’s evolution, in particular, its contemporary geography, is important to gain insight into the how and why Elmwood evolved into a successful inner-city neighborhood of the Rust Belt region.

*Contemporary Elmwood and Buffalo*

Today, Buffalo (259,959 people) has a population density of 6,438 people per square mile, and a household median income of $31,668. Among the cities found in Table 5.1 below, Buffalo ranks first in population density and only ranks behind Pittsburgh, PA in terms of household median income. Within the city, the Elmwood neighborhood, now called the Elmwood Village, is a successful urban neighborhood today. It has a number of important characteristics and qualities that make it a key case to analyze. It is a multi-faceted Rust Belt city neighborhood built around a major road lined with commercial businesses, surrounded by housing on each side. Located near the center of Buffalo, NY (Figure 5.1), Elmwood’s geography fits nicely within the recent “urban renaissance” and trends toward centrality in cities (Ehrenhalt, 2013; Edlund *et al.*, 2015).
Literature on the Rust Belt is immense and can include a variety of cities based on their size, industrial economy, and population loss. While I acknowledge that this list is not comprehensive in terms of numbers, nor inclusive of all Rust Belt cities, I chose these cities based on Rust Belt literature (Goldman, 1983; Schilling & Logan, 2008; Hobor, 2013), and also because of regional phenomenon around Buffalo (see Abel & Deitz, 2010) to simply illustrate and compare several Rust Belt cities to Buffalo.

Table 5.1. Rust Belt Demographics, 2010-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Land Area (sq. mi.)</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Population Density</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
<th>20-34 Years of Age</th>
<th>25 to 34 Years with BA or Higher</th>
<th>Household Median Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2014 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
<td>Estimate 40.38</td>
<td>259,959</td>
<td>6,438</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>$31,668</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Margin of Error +/-58</td>
<td></td>
<td>+/-0.4</td>
<td>+/-0.7</td>
<td>+/-2.0</td>
<td>+/-648</td>
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<td>Detroit, MI</td>
<td>Estimate 138.75</td>
<td>695,437</td>
<td>5,012</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>$26,095</td>
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<td>Margin of Error +/-54</td>
<td></td>
<td>+/-0.5</td>
<td>+/-0.3</td>
<td>+/-0.9</td>
<td>+/-406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>Estimate 77.70</td>
<td>392,114</td>
<td>5,047</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>$26,179</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Margin of Error +/-52</td>
<td></td>
<td>+/-0.4</td>
<td>+/-0.5</td>
<td>+/-1.1</td>
<td>+/-503</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>Estimate 55.37</td>
<td>306,045</td>
<td>5,527</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
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<td>+/-0.8</td>
<td>+/-1.5</td>
<td>+/-764</td>
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<td>Rochester, NY</td>
<td>Estimate 35.78</td>
<td>210,461</td>
<td>5,882</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>$30,784</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margin of Error +/-64</td>
<td></td>
<td>+/-0.4</td>
<td>+/-1.0</td>
<td>+/-2.0</td>
<td>+/-697</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syracuse, NY</td>
<td>Estimate 25.04</td>
<td>144,648</td>
<td>5,777</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>$31,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margin of Error +/-52</td>
<td></td>
<td>+/-0.4</td>
<td>+/-0.9</td>
<td>+/-2.6</td>
<td>+/-852</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngstown, OH</td>
<td>Estimate 33.95</td>
<td>66,013</td>
<td>1,944</td>
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<td>19.8%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<td>+/-2.1</td>
<td>+/-837</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; *U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing (2010)

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2 Literature on the Rust Belt is immense and can include a variety of cities based on their size, industrial economy, and population loss. While I acknowledge that this list is not comprehensive in terms of numbers, nor inclusive of all Rust Belt cities, I chose these cities based on Rust Belt literature (Goldman, 1983; Schilling & Logan, 2008; Hobor, 2013), and also because of regional phenomenon around Buffalo (see Abel & Deitz, 2010) to simply illustrate and compare several Rust Belt cities to Buffalo.
The neighborhood of Elmwood is built-around Elmwood Avenue. Stemming from the city’s central business district as a main arterial street, Elmwood Avenue cuts north toward
Delaware Park, and terminates further north at Interstate-290. The street crosses a number of neighborhoods in Buffalo and nearby suburbs including Allentown, Elmwood, North Buffalo, the Village of Kenmore, and Tonawanda.

While the entirety of Elmwood Avenue is seven miles long, what is called the “Elmwood Strip” is approximately 2.1 miles in length (City of Buffalo – Neighborhoods, University of Buffalo Map Library). The “strip” portion, where commercial activity dominates, is the section of the street that runs through the Elmwood Village (Figure 5.2). Representing the heart of the neighborhood, the street consists of a number of local boutique stores, coffee shops, restaurants, and bars. While the street is about two miles in length, its revitalization is very much interspersed throughout, where certain sections have been targeted for redevelopment.

![Figure 5.2. Elmwood Avenue’s building composition](image)
In addition to the plethora of shops, the street is also an important transportation route that allows for easy access to not only the downtown’s employment and recreational opportunities, as well as the street’s commercial activity, but also access to a number of cultural, educational, and medical institutions in the nearby area.

Elmwood’s centrality, road network, and accessibility, also allows individuals to access green space throughout Frederick Law Olmsted’s Parkway System. The area near the northern peak of the Elmwood Village, where Bidwell and Chapin Parkway (Figure 5.3) converge onto Soldier’s Circle, has been utilized since the late ‘90s for the Elmwood-Bidwell Farmers’ Market. This market originated under Forever Elmwood in attempts to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood and to also make important connections to businesses around the region.

Figure 5.3. Image of Chapin Parkway from Commerce Vol. 1, no. 5 "The New Elmwood District" (August 1903)
Additionally, the parkway space has also allowed for both the Elmwood Art Festival and the Elmwood-Bidwell Concert series to occur each summer for the past 19 years. Here, crowds are drawn from around the area to hear local musicians perform. All three events have been “game changers” for Elmwood by bringing excitement and people to the area, as well as having economic impacts through the creation of local businesses and partnerships (N. Nussbaumer, interview).

Located north of Bidwell and Chapin Parkway are a number of key institutions tied to the Elmwood Village. State University of New York College at Buffalo (SUNY Buffalo State), for example, is located northwest of Elmwood. The college and its student population historically have had strong ties to Elmwood’s commercial makeup at its north-end near Forest and Elmwood Avenue as a result of two cornerstone bars. Mr. Goodbar (est. 1968) (Figure 5.4) and Coles (est. 1934) have been mainstays for the “Elmwood Strip,” not only for college students but also for young urban and suburban professionals (J. Kwiatkowski Radlich, November 3, 2014). Additionally, Delaware Park, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and the Burchfield Penney Center – located around SUNY Buffalo State’s campus – are popular cultural institutions for both locals and tourists visiting the area. Another cultural institution, Kleinhans Music Hall, is located at the very southwest corner of the Elmwood Village at Symphony Circle. In addition to cultural and artistic institutions, Elmwood is home to Women’s and Children’s Hospital of Buffalo (WCHOB) and is proximate to the expanding Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus, both of which help draw affluent medical professionals to the area.
Figure 5.4. Mr. Goodbar is a popular bar for college students and young people on Elmwood near Forest Ave.

All of these components have helped give rise to the Elmwood Village. They are inherently tied to the area and have allowed Elmwood to become a destination for not only people within the Buffalo-Niagara region to visit but also for tourists coming from outside places such as Canada (Glynn, 2012). Additionally, the proximate institutions have allowed Elmwood to draw people in for both temporary activities such as recreation, shopping, eating, and drinking and for permanency - activities that allow them to live, work, and play. Such draw is further emphasized by Mayor Byron Brown. “It is our intention to continue to make Buffalo more livable for everyone...We are and will remain a live, work and play community. By doing this, we will attract more business, and more people will want to live here” (Burney, 2012). While these many institutions are crucial to the area, this case study delves further into some of the spatial processes that have contributed to the Elmwood Village’s contemporary success.

**Conceptualizing the Village: Policy Transfer and Place-Branding**

From the 1970s through to the early 2000s, Elmwood Avenue became known as the “Elmwood Strip” as it changed from a thoroughfare during the day and college bar culture at night. Today, the area is called the Elmwood Village. This evolution among others including
crime and suburban-like buildings, influenced the way in which the area was perceived inside and outside of the city. The “strip” name was further cemented by the non-profit organization, Forever Elmwood, through its “Do the Strip” entrepreneurial place-marketing campaign, which institutionalized the name and influenced the ways in which the area was perceived. As such, Elmwood Avenue was placed on the map as a retail destination, which was emphasized by the organization’s decision to solely display commercial aspects of the neighborhood. While businesses were included to compete with the suburban malls of the area, the surrounding residential portion of the neighborhood was not part of this planning effort. One informant, Robert Meredith, acknowledges that this divide between business and residential interests has been an issue in the past.

With only retail highlighted, Forever Elmwood sought to advertise both parts of its constituents: businesses and residents. Efforts on the street changed in 1998 when Forever Elmwood received grant money to sponsor a neighborhood action plan that would alter the way the area was conceptualized. The plan would prepare and create guidelines that would “reinforce and support the unique nature of Elmwood Avenue” (Elmwood Village Commercial District Design Guidelines). The group, Flynn Battaglia Architects, PC, was chosen to lead the project. A key individual in the assignment was Jessie Schnell-Fisher, a Buffalonian working for the consultant group at the time. Prior to her time at Flynn Battaglia, Schnell-Fisher lived in Seattle, WA, where she went to school and worked for the city’s Department of Neighborhoods. While working for the city, she came across the urban village concept, which she referred to as “a village within the city” (J. Fisher, interview, October 8, 2015). This idea was transferred from
Seattle’s revamped zoning code and applied to the project in Elmwood. This transfer of policy, from Seattle to Buffalo, became mobilized through Fisher. Drawing on Seattle’s urban village planning efforts from the 1990s (see Gover, 2015), Fisher was able to transfer this planning policy to the Forever Elmwood, where he institution took it and utilized I for improved place-branding and marketing.

The *Elmwood Village Action Plan* (October 1999) (Figure 5.5), as well as the *Elmwood Village Zoning Recommendations* (December 1999) were early beginnings to the *Elmwood Village Design Guidelines*. These guidelines would be later codified by the City of Buffalo’s Common Council in 2009. Prior to their creation, suburban-like, single-story buildings were permitted. Contrastingly, the new standards borrow some items from New Urbanist design principles, which include the promotion of pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and increased density. Buildings under the *Elmwood Village Design Guidelines* must be between two and five stories, built right up to the street, incorporate visible storefronts, and ensure the streetscape be pedestrian-friendly (C. Battin & A. Koeppel, interview). Further components of the policy
helped to preserve the historic urban character of the neighborhood, where the majority of the buildings were two to two and a half stories in height and mixed in use.

With new policies and marketing schemes in place denoting the Elmwood Village name, the Elmwood Strip was slowly being replaced by an attempt to create a guide to a “family-friendly,” “safe” space in the city (Figure 5.6) (M. Ferdman, interview), as well as one that was more encompassing of surrounding residential areas (Figure 5.8). As such, in 2006 Forever Elmwood announced the unveiling of a new logo (Figure 5.7), name change and place-based brand. Through grant contributions, Forever Elmwood took on the Elmwood Village Association name and redefined its scope and goals to include:

“increas[ing an] economic impact in the neighborhood; increas[ing] property values for both commercial and residential properties; increas[ing] the positive image of the neighborhood to visitors with new dollars from outside of the community; and increas[ing] retail activity through promoting their new location brand identity via cultural tourism destinations and organizations” (Snow Naylor, 2006).

The Elmwood Village Association’s goals can be seen as economic growth oriented, which are accomplished through the development of place-branding, marketing, and destination making.

As such, the tail-end of Forever Elmwood’s regime can be seen as a razing or erasure of the Elmwood Strip, in its name, perception, and urban form. No longer would the area’s form be
identified solely as a strip that – as one respondent commented – was a “long, linear, straight line” that included just the businesses and street components, but one that would be more village-like that was “fleshed out, square, [and] three-dimensional” and inclusive of both business and residential interests. Such change and the shifting regime toward the Elmwood Village Association had allowed for goals to be outlined that would help “raise” the neighborhood into a village.

The change in place-branding efforts between the strip and village made by Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association can be seen below. Results from an analysis of Buffalo News articles (n=482) between 1990 and 2015 indicate the city’s newspaper began identifying the area as the Elmwood Village more frequently in 2005 compared to the Elmwood Strip (Figure 5.9).

![Figure 5.9. Word frequency: Elmwood “Strip” vs. Elmwood “Village”](image)

Results from Elmwood’s transformation into the Elmwood Village hit on the organizations initial goals. Spatial economic outcomes from this research include changes in property values and rent, both perceptually and quantitatively. Additionally, new build, mixed-use development trends have brought higher rents into the area spurring other property
acquisition for future developments to occur. Spatial economic changes in property values and
development co-occur with Elmwood Village Association as an institution theme.

Furthermore, spatial social outcomes include demographic changes. 12 out of 19
informants perceived a “back-to-the-city” movement occurring in not only the neighborhood but
also in the city. Co-occurring with this theme was a perceived increase in the number of families
with young children living in the Elmwood Village, which was often compared to informants’
perceptions of past decades where, as one informant alluded, there were fewer strollers on the
street. Additionally, outside of families, informants frequently described changes in the social
makeup of the neighborhood residents’ age. Of the 19 informants, 18 had mentioned
Millennials, four talked of “Hipsters”, and 1 had used the term “twentysomethings” to describe
their observations of youth. Between these three terms, Millennials and Hipsters were used
interchangeably among those individuals who had mentioned both.

Contrastingly, only a few (n=6) informants spoke of empty-nesters; more prevalence of
this demographic occurred within archival newspaper and blog articles. Often co-occurring with
younger social groups were themes of young professionals, or “yuppies,” being perceived as
moving into Elmwood. Arising with young professionals involved themes of centrality and
anchor institutions – more specifically dealing with Elmwood’s proximity to Buffalo’s
downtown and the expanding Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus, both of which offer
employment opportunities to professional and creatives. All of these social trends, within the
data, were built around broader national trends, and trends found in the media. For example,
some informants acknowledged that families with young children were moving back to the city;
however, they recognized that they could be “wrong” because they don’t know the quantitative
data. Often supplementing a lack of knowledge of the census data, informants used their own
observations to answer questions on social and economic change. Disparity between informant observations and their alignment with trends found in the media and larger cities, may shape individuals’ perceptions on what is actually occurring in Elmwood and Buffalo.

Results from narrative policy analyses on the Elmwood Village Design Standards and Buffalo Green Code indicate similarities in the use of New Urbanist design principles; however, differences exist within the policies involving urban space, scale, and development (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Results of Narrative Policy Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elmwood Village Design Standards</th>
<th>Green Code’s N-2C Transect</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New urbanist best practice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (Termini, December 3, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Primarily 2 – 2.5 stories</td>
<td>2-5 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Width</td>
<td>30 – 40 ft.</td>
<td>15ft. – 225 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Business Sq. Footage</td>
<td>2,500 sf. single floor / 5,000 total sf</td>
<td>Ground floor commercial 10,000 sf. Excess of 150,000 sf. Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>Not permitted</td>
<td>Permissible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Types</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Carriage, Civic Buildings, Commercial Block, Shopfront house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Yard Greenspace</td>
<td>Permissible</td>
<td>Not permitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Informant responses from questions on the Buffalo Green Code and on institutions enacting urban policy acknowledge and emphasize the Elmwood Village Association’s (n=19) role in shaping Elmwood more than Forever Elmwood (n=10). Such findings may be indicative of the informant’s age. Those of who responded to bother Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association were typically older in age, having spent more time involved in the area.

Changes in race in Elmwood have remained relatively unchanged since 2000; however, from 2010 to 2014 an increase occurred in white population while Black and Hispanic populations decreased (Table 5.2). The population since 2000, has remained majority white nearing 70%. Compared to the city as a whole, Elmwood also has larger percentages of white population than Buffalo, where the city has greater percentages of Black and Hispanic throughout.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elmwood Village</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Buffalo, NY</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
<td>27,364 (+/-2,870) 719  -</td>
<td>259,959 (+/-58) -1,351 -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>2010</em></td>
<td>26,645 -1,105 -</td>
<td>261,310 -31,338 -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>2000</em></td>
<td>27,750 -       -</td>
<td>292,648 -        -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>18,996 (+/-2,687) 1,022  69.4%</td>
<td>118,586 (+/-2,033) -1,982 45.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>17,974 -1,175 -67.5%</td>
<td>120,568 -30,486 46.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>19,149 69.0%</td>
<td>151,054 51.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3,490 (+/-1,619) -1,217 12.8%</td>
<td>95,741 (+/-1,482) -6,076 36.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4,707 -624 -17.7%</td>
<td>101,817 -7,553 39.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5,331 19.2%</td>
<td>109,370 37.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,378 (+/-1,385) -99  8.7%</td>
<td>26,084 (+/-1,178) -1,435 10.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,477 194 9.3%</td>
<td>27,519 6,392 10.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,283 8.2%</td>
<td>21,127 7.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Decennial Census, 2000-2010, Geolytics, Inc., East Brunswick, NJ*

**Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2014, U.S. Census**

This trend existed in other populations as well. “Twentysomethings,” Millennials, yuppies, young professionals, and Hipsters were seen as driving the social dynamics of the area; however, quantitatively, youth (20-34 years) have remained relatively constant. Openings of yoga studios, artisan...
delis, coffee shops, bars, mixed-use buildings with luxury apartments, such as 766 Elmwood Avenue (Figure 5.10), as well as organic food markets, have come to represent the changes in Elmwood’s urban landscape, which cater to its new demographics (Figure 5.11 & 5.12). Formerly a vacant parking lot, 766 Elmwood fills in a gap on Elmwood and captures higher rents by targeting key demographics like young professionals, Millennials, and empty-nesters. Under the property’s “Features & Amenities” description on the Benchmark Groups page (“766-770 Elmwood Avenue”), the building offers tenants access to the “high demand Elmwood Village”, close location to its walkable commercial street, and medical institutions. The rents at 766 Elmwood average $1,400 per month (Terreri, 2014).
Figure 5.11. Globe Market, a popular organic food market located next to the new build at 766 Elmwood

Figure 5.12. Power Yoga Buffalo, also located next to the new build at 766 Elmwood
Millennials (aged 20 – 34), or as I deem more so as a key age cohort, served as a pervasive theme, both quantitatively and qualitatively, throughout this case study. From 2006 to 2012, Millennials in the Buffalo-Niagara region grew by 10.1% compared to New York State (8.1%), and the entire U.S. (7.4%) (Robinson, 2014). American Community Survey data from 2010 and 2014’s five-year estimates show that Millennials accounted for anywhere between 25 and 40% of the population for Elmwood tracts compared to the city wide’s 25.8% (Figure 5.13). In addition, six of the nine Elmwood tracts saw an increase in Millennial population between 2010 and 2014. Qualitatively,

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3 I use Millennials (aged 20-34) as an age group. I acknowledge that such age range can change based on the date of publication and/or census year. For example, Strauss & Howe (1991) defines Millennials being born between 1982-2004. An issue comes about when you compare American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2014, U.S. Census using ages 20-34 with data from 2010 and 2000. I’m using Millennials, as well as empty-nesters, not in a rigid fashion, but more so in looking at trends of age groups. So, youth (20-34), and young retirees (55-64).
the trend in Millennials co-occurred with a growing presence of new building developments. This existed often through developers trying to build on the basis of broader national marketing segments for the group, in which Millennials “typically rent rather than buy” and have difficulty purchasing homes because “changes in lending practices have made it harder for [them] to qualify for mortgages” (Samuels, 2015).

Figure 5.13 also shows Millennials are more prevalent in Elmwood than Empty-Nesters (aged 55-64). While the graph shows lower prevalence of Empty-Nesters than Millennials, informant testimonies seemingly bypassed acknowledging this demographic group completely, with only two informants mentioning the group. The greatest increase in empty-nester population occurred in the southeast of the neighborhood near downtown and the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus. Regardless of the lack of prevalence among data drawn from the interviews, the theme was consistently mentioned in newspaper and blogs, co-occurring frequently with the topic of new building developments. Nearly all discussion of the new building developments pre-2010 mentioned empty-nesters moving into the city, like Millennials, based on national demographic trends, such as changes in lifestyle and desire for urban amenities.

Similar findings on same-sex, unmarried couples were seen within the qualitative data, though they were even scarcer than those found on empty-nesters. Only two newspapers mentioned gays and Elmwood together. The discussion subsisted of Buffalo’s gay pride parade occurring in the neighborhood (Sapong, 2014) and the gay population in Elmwood and how it relates with young professionals and artistic individuals (Meyer, 2002). Conversely, recent quantitative data (Figure 5.14) indicates that indices of same-sex, unmarried households increased from 2000-2010, greater than trends seen in the city and county as a whole. However,
data shows from 2010 to 2014, unmarried, same-sex households dropped across all three geographies.

Data on same-sex households is particularly difficult to assess over a longitudinal time period, especially in certain states, due to a variation in the legalization of same-sex marriage on the state level. For example, New York State passed the Marriage Equality Act on July 24, 2011. The 2010 Census was the first to show estimates of same-sex married couples in special tables, despite the fact that states, like Massachusetts, had already legalized same-sex marriage. Issues assessing gay geographies revolve around, not only the availability of the data, but the geographies in which they are reported on. While the U.S. Census has released data on the topic, the data is only available on certain geographic scales, which does not include the census tract level. Other issues in examining the data above deals with reporting issues. The U.S. Census acknowledges that errors in mismarking occur, which can create significant errors in estimates.
on same-sex households (“Same-Sex Couples Main”). Such issues may potentially influence my results.

Findings on spatial social outcomes of Elmwood’s transformation also include phenomena such as a “back-to-the-city movement” and gentrification. It is important to acknowledge that when questioned about social changes, informants were hesitant to answer because they were unsure of the current data available. For example, J.M. Reed, a real estate broker for Gurney, Bourne, and Becker and property owner in Elmwood states, “I think that – this is sort of an on-the-ground view that I don’t think can be backed up by numbers yet. [But] the Elmwood Village overall is probably increasing in the net-worth of buyers.” Such testament was seen about half of my informants’ testaments.

12 out of 19 informants perceived a back-to-the-city movement occurring within the Elmwood Village; though the reasoning behind the phenomenon stemmed between informants’ knowledge on broader national trends and their perception of Buffalo as a “safer” city.

![Figure 5.15. Percent Married-Couple Family Households with children under 18 years old (%); Source: Decennial Census, 1970-2000, Geolytics, Inc., East Brunswick, NJ; American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2010, 2014, U.S. Census](image-url)
Only a few informants, who were directly involved with Forever Elmwood in the early 1990s, acknowledge the institution’s effort in cleaning up the street. Attardo, Ferdman, and Newell Nussbaumer all believe Forever Elmwood contributed to an improvement in the neighborhood’s safety. However, many informants did recognize the Elmwood Village Association’s role in organizing family-friendly events like the Farmers’ Market, Concert Series, and other events. Martin DelleBovi, Vice President for the Benchmark Group argues that Elmwood’s amenities allow for families to enjoy the city’s activities in a safe environment (DelleBovi, interview).

Developer, Martin DelleBovi sees the families moving back are due to the changes made by the Elmwood Village Association and the many proximate cultural amenities nearby. “[B]ecause of all the things the city has to offer - the entertainment, values, the arts, the theater district, the museums – I think for all those reasons people feel comfortable raising their young families in the city and exposing them all to that” (DelleBovi, interview). Others further the change in families by specifically seeing more young children living in the neighborhood (J. Fisher, interview). This further positions the interconnectedness between Elmwood’s transformation in a safe place and being characterized as family-friendly with urban amenities and the movement of people back into the city. With qualitative data following the broader, national trend of families moving back to the cities, census data between 1970 and 2014 indicate Elmwood as a whole has actually decreased in the number of married-couple family households with children under 18 (Figure 5.15). However, between 2000 and 2010, there was a slight increase in the population, which can possibly be due to changes made by Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association in their promotion of making Elmwood a more family-oriented place.
In conjunction with the back-to-the-city movement, approximately one third of the informants (n=7) discussed gentrification as an important social and economic change occurring in and just beyond the neighborhood. No informant suggested that work done by Forever Elmwood or the Elmwood Village Association helped influence the process, despite the vast work Forever Elmwood accomplished in the 1990s by cleaning up the neighborhood. However, people acknowledged the role in which new build developments were a factor in rising rents. Carly Battin, executive director of the Elmwood Village Association, acknowledges some of the economic changes occurring the neighborhood. “The new apartments that are being built are generally $1,000 and up. Whereas a couple of years ago, the average apartment here would have been $700 a month and now we’re seeing $1,200 to $1,500 a month” (C. Battin & A. Koeppel, interview).

Quantitative data indicates both housing value and rental cost increased in the Elmwood Village between 2010 and 2014. As shown in the figure below, median gross rent increased during this time, with largest percent growth (26%) occurring in the 65.01 census tract. On average, the median gross rent among Elmwood tracts grew by 12%, from $609 to $691, between 2010 and 2014, greater than those found in Erie County as a whole (Figure 5.16).
Property values have also changed. In Figure 5.17 we can see that Elmwood’s housing is skewed left toward higher housing values, where Buffalo’s is more centered, where Elmwood has higher percentages of more expensive housing. Between 2000 and 2014, the percentage of owner-occupied housing stock values in Elmwood diminished for properties valued less than $100,000 (Figure 5.17). Nearly all homes valued between $100,000 and $399,999 increased during this time, whereas Buffalo’s only increased just slightly. All values between $175,000 and $399,999 in Elmwood increased, accounting for 37.5% of the distribution in 2010 and to 49.1% in 2014. Compared to Buffalo, this growth was much greater. The City of Buffalo, as a whole, saw percentages in this range between 2010 and 2014 increase from 8.5% to 11.7% respectively. Such changes in housing can possibly be explained by the efforts made by the Elmwood Village Association’s economic growth goals.
Figure 5.17. Distribution of Owner-Occupied Housing Values, 2000-2014
Household Median Income between 2010 and 2014 has also increased across Elmwood. Elmwood’s tracts furthest south (67.01 and 67.02), grew by about 70% and 50% respectively (Figure 5.18), where in the same tracts, young educated individuals also increased in population (Figure 5.19). Such trends may be indicative of the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus’ expansion.
Demographic change co-occurred with themes of urban and cultural amenities. Millennials and “twentysomethings” moving into the city and Elmwood are likely due to urban and cultural amenities found in cities. Youth have been driven to the area by the many amenities the street has to offer like live music and art scenes Buffalo's live alternative music scene. (Taylor, 2007). Other urban characters such as walkability, were also perceived in driving up demand and price. “The popularity of the Elmwood Village has been terrific,” said Susan Lenahan, broker and head of the city office for M.J. Peterson Corp. "It's the walkability

Such findings emphasize the importance and role that Forever Elmwood played on transforming the street and area.

With rents and housing values increasing, some acknowledge the potential spatial ramifications it could have on surrounding neighborhood, such as displacement. However, individuals, like Councilman Joseph Golombek, believe the phenomenon is ultimately a positive occurrence for the city. He states, “It has its drawbacks...Obviously [displacement] is negative, but I think I’d rather face it than drive-by shootings. Every negative has a positive, every positive has a negative quite honestly” (Golombek, interview, September 23, 2015). Even so, outcomes stemming from gentrification, like increasing housing prices and rents, were predominantly seen as positives. Though, it should be acknowledged that many of my informants were involved in redevelopment process, and also have economic growth goals as well. For instance, a testament made by realtor Bret Llewellyn for the Buffalo News stated, “Our company has seen demand for residential housing on the West Side triple over the last four years” (Epstein, 2011). Such demand for housing on the nearby West Side indicates that, for many, Elmwood has become too expensive for potential young homeowners to purchase a home.

Harvey Garrett, former Executive Director of the West Side Community collaborative presents the phenomenon occurring on the boundary between Elmwood and the West Side as being a positive process that is beneficial to Buffalo rather than a negative one, as it contrasts the city’s long-seen decline:

In a region that is losing population, in a city that is supposed to be declining, we have a neighborhood that is reviving itself through self-determination and dwarfing all other areas of the region in growth by tripling its property values over the past ten years. (H. Garrett, interview)
Such testament further displays the positive ramifications of such phenomenon. Despite the negatives, this spatial process is seen to be beneficial to a region that has seen decline.

Throughout my research, people presented this spatial phenomenon, broadly, as being gentrification, in both the form of production and consumption. One informant’s explanation of the construction at 766 Elmwood displays Smith’s rent gap thesis (1979). DelleBovi acknowledges the phenomenon:

We’ve owned property in the Elmwood Village since back in the 80’s. That lot was a lot that we purchased a medical building from a physician who wanted to sell his building to us and pull the equity out so he could buy a property down in Florida. We owned his building and his lot, then when he passed away we tore the building down and we kept an empty lot there for a period of about 6 or 7 years waiting for the right opportunity to develop that parcel. We feel now is the best opportunity to do that – that the market is strong and that people are moving back into the city. We felt that we would be successful in putting upscale apartments on that parcel.

The space where the new build exists now was acquired by the Benchmark Group amidst the Elmwood’s decline. During this time, the area next to the property where Globe Market is located was an alleyway called “Needle Alley” that had drug paraphernalia littered on the ground (N. Nussbaumer, interview). Such urban issues were at play for the Benchmark Group; however, the company persisted and held onto the property until 2013, when the potential was “realized.” Such description, while not quantitative in nature, exemplifies the process by which Smith (1979) described, where rent potential was eventually realized.

Contrary to the rent gap, the majority of testaments mirrored more cultural and consumption explanations of gentrification. Out of the 19 informants, 10 had mentioned gentrification was occurring, and 9 suggested that the gentrification in and around Elmwood was based on explanations of urban consumption. For one, developer, Rocco Termini, argued that not only is gentrification occurring in congruence to the increasing presence of young people and
their desire to fix-up houses, but that it is also pushing the boundaries the Elmwood Village, where the phenomenon is spreading west:

I think so-called gentrification is moving out to Connecticut Street, Vermont, Rhode Island; around the Richmond area. Five years ago you could go out and buy a house for $20,000 and now those same very houses are $150,000-175,000 because you have a lot of young people moving into those areas organically rebuilding and doing most of the work themselves. (R. Termini, interview, December 3, 2015)

Termini’s testaments explain the prototypical gentrification explanation, where people are moving into the neighborhood and fixing inexpensive homes. Despite Termini’s testament, it should be acknowledged that, as a developer, he does not see his mixed-use projects as causing gentrification. Termini views the process as a more individualized process of urban pioneers wanting to partake in grassroots development.

He further discusses the ramifications that the city’s economy has had on attracting young people to live in places like Elmwood. He emphasizes work done by state and medical institutions bringing funds and job opportunities into the area:

It’s amazing that five years ago these same kids were moving out of Buffalo because there were no opportunities here. And now, I think we’ve seen the tide of people moving out of Buffalo and staying here because now people see more opportunities. They see the Buffalo Billion – our Medical Campus - they see they have better chances of getting a decent job (Termini, interview).

Additionally, the professionals working in medical fields that Termini mentions were also shown to be an outcome of the City of Buffalo’s work building on “talent and technology,” where most developers are trying to “cater” to people working in the Medical Campus. These individuals he feels are those who making more money and can afford to pay the higher rents. Elmwood’s geographic position to the expanding Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus is key going forward in the discussion of professionals, creative class, wealth, and youth.
Policy and Change: Erasing the Elmwood Strip through Planning

Since 2005, the Elmwood Village’s urban landscape has seen growth in new build developments, many of which have been mixed-use (Figures 5.30, 31, 32 & Table 5.3). Years prior to the codification of the Elmwood Village Design Guidelines saw a greater presence of single-story, suburban styled architecture. For example, a Blockbuster video was built in July 1989 at 765 Elmwood Avenue (Figure 5.20). Occupying a 5,500 square-foot space, the store was seen to resemble structures in the suburbs, contributing little to the neighborhood’s urban characteristics (Linstedt, 1998). Only later in 2012 would the space be divided up and recalibrated to fit the needs of the pedestrian with patios and changing consumer tastes with Panera Bread, the Mexican-eatery Agave, and Spot Coffee – a popular local coffee shop for young residents (Figure 5.21).
Additional suburban features that have existed on Elmwood Avenue include a Kentucky Fried Chicken (now a mixed-use new urbanist building at 448 Elmwood) (Figure 5.23), a single-story Rite Aid pharmacy (Figure 5.22), and a number of single-story banks with drive-thru ATMs.

By converting former suburban or empty spaces into mixed-use, Elmwood is able to accommodate the demands of demographics moving forward. These changes further display how Elmwood and Buffalo have shifted the ways they construct buildings – moving away from the automobile to the creative class and Millennials - by erasing suburban features on the urban landscape and building a supply of high-density apartments and mixed-use buildings for the now, urban street (Figure 5.23 & 5.24).
New urbanist design practices emanating from the Elmwood Village Design Standards that were put in place further spread across Elmwood’s landscape in the form of townhomes. One infill development was created by architect and developer, Karl Frizlen. A key architect for the Frizlen Group and member of the Congress of New Urbanism. Frizlen has built a number of mixed-use, urban infill development projects within the Elmwood Village including 504 Elmwood (completed in 2006 by the team of Karl Frizlen, Paul Johnson and Michael Ferdman) (Figure 5.23) and 305 W. Utica near Elmwood Avenue (Figure 5.24). Each project incorporates some new urbanist design features practices by building up to the street, ground floor retail space, and hiding parking below the property units. However, work on New Urbanism may also argue that these forms are, in fact, not New Urbanist, based on the fact that they do not align with surrounding building aesthetics (Ellis, 2002)

Ultimately, such development has been positively received among the Elmwood Village Association, the City of Buffalo, and unsurprisingly, developers. However, some view the new construction in a negative light, particularly on the aesthetics of the buildings. Discussion on the aesthetics revolves around the constructions as being “cheap,” “inexpensive”, “mall-like” (J. Reed, interview), and above all, not in character with the rest of the neighborhood (N. Nussbaumer, interview). Regardless of the aesthetics, dialogue on new-builds in the Elmwood
Village are representative of success and progress by means of eliminating blight, vacancy, and suburban-styled buildings. Such positive developments occur primarily due to the Elmwood Village Association’s ability to bridge communication gaps between residents, businesses, and the city as a whole. “If a developer wants to build in my council district, I say, ‘You need to speak with the Elmwood Village first’” (Golombek, interview). Using the Elmwood Village as an initial step in construction is important across all developers and city officials because they see the organization as a useful tool and guide for new development. “[The Elmwood Village Association is] really there to guide people on new [builds] with restrictions. I talk to them and they have been very helpful” (Termini, 2015). Martin DelleBovi sees the organization as an institution that bridges communication gaps as well:

It’s a very valuable tool for developers. They go between you and the public and they assist in reaching out to the community to find out what the residents are looking for and what the residents’ concerns will be with what we do... it’s almost like a homeowners’ association, but it is much more sophisticated than that (M. DelleBovi, interview).

The organization also holds community meetings that help article questions and concerns prior to approval processes (Golombek, interview). Such communication by the Elmwood Village Association further expands their extent and abilities to not only bridge dialogue between residents and businesses, but also with developers and on higher scales at the city-level.

The Elmwood Village Associations ability to communicate and bridge gaps also takes form in another result, where policy and design transfer are spread from Elmwood to other areas within Buffalo and the surrounding region (Figure 5.25). Policy and practice in Elmwood, like that found in McCann (2008), has displayed a spatial mobility with outcomes. This mobility takes the form of the Elmwood Model, or rather a regional “best practices” model for revitalizing an urban, mixed-use places in decline. Such model was indicated by 14 informants, where they
pointed out the role that the Elmwood Village has had on other areas. This model was also seen throughout newspaper and blog text.

Figure 5.25 Networks of the Elmwood Model

The Elmwood Model, stems from social networks between Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association, with other business associations or “main street” organizations across the region. Information and communication flowed through these networks through
individuals in Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association, bought also via Buffalo
Common Council Members.

Michael LoCurto, former councilman of the Delaware District had experiences sharing
best practices with Justin Azzarella, the executive director of the Elmwood Village Association
from 2005-2012, to the Village of Williamsville and the city of Niagara Falls during walks of the
neighborhood (LoCurto, interview). One social relationship he made on a tour was with Niagara
Falls Councilwoman, Kristen M. Grandinetti. The councilwoman sought to create a partnership
on the tour in hopes of learning how to create a “new downtown living destination” through both
“time and effort” just like Elmwood did (Buffalo Rising, 2012). Through communication, such
transfer of “best practices” or policy can occur (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996, 2000); however,
through this finding, it doesn’t necessarily mean global circulation (McCann, 2011), but actually
circulation within – in this case – a declining region.

In addition to spatial transfers of policy and best practices, Elmwood’s model plays out
across the urban landscape. Two new urbanist, infill developments have been created by
architect and developer, Karl Frizlen, in both the Elmwood Village and on Hertel Avenue. Karl
Frizlen, a key architect for the Frizlen Group and member of the Congress of New Urbanism, has
built a number of mixed-use, urban infill development projects within the Elmwood Village
including 504 Elmwood (completed in 2006 by Frizlen, Paul Johnson and Ferdman).
Two of Frizlen’s projects have played out on the urban landscape via design transfer. 305 W. Utica near Elmwood Avenue (Figure 5.24), and 1685 Hertel Avenue (Figure 5.27), are nearly identical. Each incorporate new urbanist design features and best practices by building up to the street, and hiding parking below the property units. The only exception between the two is that 1685 Hertel Avenue is mixed-use, bringing a growing presence to a portion of Hertel that has long been vacant (Sommer, 2015). While conversations with key actors in these institutions have allowed these places to apply the Elmwood Model to their own locale, we can also see the emergence of comparing the physical makeup of commercial area within the region. Through the diffusion of ideas and suggestions, a transfer of design within the urban landscape occurs,
where such change is also shown on a popular map indicating Hertel Avenue as the “New Elmwood” (Figure 5.26).

Figure 5.27. New urbanist mixed-use development at 1685 Hertel Avenue (Source: John Hickey, Buffalo News, April 19, 2016)
Figure 5.28 Map of the Elmwood Village’s redevelopment projects
## Table 5.4 Redevelopment Projects in Elmwood, 2006-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Developers, Architects</th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Prope rty Parc e</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Apartments</th>
<th>Retail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>504 Elmwood</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>New, infill</td>
<td>FJF Development LLC*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,720 Behind</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmwood Village Hotel**</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>Planned in 2006, never began construction</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Savarino Cos., Frizlen</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>42,035 Behind &amp; Underground</td>
<td>Hotel (72-80 rooms)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmwood Gateway**</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>Planned in 2009, in limbo</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Chason Affinity, Charles Gordon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42,035 Multi-level</td>
<td>Mixed-Use: Hotel (125 rooms), apartments (20-30)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>305 W. Utica</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>New, infill</td>
<td>Savarino Cos., Frizlen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16,160 Below units</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>448 Elmwood</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>New, infill</td>
<td>The Krog Corp., Ferdman, Frizlen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9,396 Behind</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Adaptive Reuse</td>
<td>Port City Preservation LLC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>54,145 Behind</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson Olmsted Complex</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Adaptive Reuse</td>
<td>Richardson Center Corporation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,887,730 Behind</td>
<td>Hotel (88 rooms) &amp; Conference Center</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazareth Nursing Home</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>Planned in 2015</td>
<td>Adaptive Reuse</td>
<td>Uniland Development Corp.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>128,154 Behind unit</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School 56</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>Planned in 2015</td>
<td>Adaptive Reuse</td>
<td>Ellicott Development Corp.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66,995 Behind</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>905 Elmwood</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>New, brownfield redevelopment</td>
<td>Ellicott Development Corp.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14,080 Behind</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>766 Elmwood</td>
<td>Elmwood</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>New, infill</td>
<td>Benchmark Group, Frizlen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15,444 Behind</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1685 Hertel</td>
<td>Hertel</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>New, infill</td>
<td>Frizlen Group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15,750 Below units</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*FJF Development LLC is operated by Karl Frizlen, Paul Johnson, and Michael Ferdman.

**Both Savarino Cos. & Chason Affinity planned on building a mixed-use structure that included a hotel at the southeast corner of Elmwood and Forest. Savarino Cos. faced backlash and litigation in 2006 from neighbors over deed restrictions dating back to 1896 that restricted commercial land-use on the parcels, which subsequently forced the company to withdraw its proposal. Both projects have attempted in creating a “gateway” to the Elmwood Village at the north end of the neighborhood.

***In anticipation to the redevelopment of WCHOB, Sinatra & Co. Realty purchased Casa-di-Pizza, and Ellicott Development Corp. acquired the Nektar restaurant property adding square footage to the baseline calculation. With various developers having already acquired adjacent and nearby property around the medical campus, a range of square footage is provided to account for additional properties that would be incorporated into the redevelopment.
This chapter presents the Elmwood Village’s contemporary geography. Results presented follow the trajectory presented by Roth & Grant (2015) that many urban places experience: decline and revitalization. However, Elmwood’s case is of particular interest. We can see an interesting inner-city street’s transformation into one that was more suburban in form, as a result of urban renewal like policies, to one that embraces its urban characteristics. Over time, the suburban Elmwood Strip name was razed and would become a much more urban place, now, the Elmwood Village.
Chapter 6

Toward a Better Buffalo

In 1990, Mark Goldman bemoaned many poor buildings and plans that hampered the city, arguing that strong efforts needed to be made in improving Buffalo’s urban design. Today, such improvements in the urban landscape have occurred in Elmwood and are visible. At the time of Goldman’s writing, Elmwood was known as the Elmwood Strip. It was composed of many suburban, single-story buildings, and favored the automobile more than pedestrian.

Today, Elmwood is much different. Now, it is known as the Elmwood Village, where the commercial street is dominated by coffee shops, organic food markets, yoga studios, local retail, restaurants, and bars to accommodate changing demographic tastes. New Mixed-use buildings are complete with even more under construction and planned. No longer is the urban landscape of Elmwood Village treated as a suburban shopping strip, where “drive-in service stations and convenient marts, and drive-through fast-food restaurants and banks” littered the Elmwood Strip of yester years (Goldman, 1990, p. 304). People are walking the streets, and density is rising. As a result of the success built by Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association through communication and development tools, developers are targeting and capitalizing on the neighborhood’s economic and social transformation. For developers, the time makes sense. Families, Millennials, and young professionals are growing along with property values and rent. Boundaries of the neighborhood are being pushed with growing demand from families and young people desiring an urban environment and urban amenities.
Elmwood’s transformation was, in part, due to entrepreneurial governance (Harvey, 1989) through the local institutions of Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association. Through their abilities several neoliberal development tools were utilized (Sager, 2011), where primarily pro-growth, place-marketing schemes were put in place to create a destination that was “cool” (Zimmerman, 2008). Such changes are also reflected through the ways Elmwood was branding, where it incorporated more dimension and more interest groups. No longer is the neighborhood seen in a suburban and linear fashion. It has dimension and shape. The neighborhood today represents one of demographic change. Millennials or young people, creatives, professionals, and families are perceived to be returning, ultimately influencing spatial processes and the urban landscape. The changes in Elmwood, also have ramifications elsewhere, particularly on the movement of policy and design. Due to the entrepreneurial nature of cities (Harvey, 1989), places are drawing on not only “best practices,” but practices that work. These practices often are boosted and mobile (McCann, 2013, 2011).

“It Takes a Village”: Enabling Change in Elmwood

Identifying and analyzing why Elmwood evolved into a successful neighborhood in the Rust Belt is key in displaying how this research can and will be applied to places beyond it. Findings reveal three key themes. One, the emergence of Forever Elmwood in 1994 and its later iteration, the Elmwood Village Association in 2005 was vital in enabling residents to take action and partake in change. By organizing under one body, strong local governance occurred as a result of collective interests between businesses and residents. Such governance allowed for important changes to the built environment to take place, which positively affected the area’s change. Two, marketing and branding schemes conducted by Forever Elmwood, and later, through the Elmwood Village Association, enabled the neighborhood and street to become: one,
a destination; two, an urban village; and three, an attractive and safe place for people and families to live. Finally, the creation and codification of the Elmwood Village Design Standards allowed the evolution to come full circle. Restrictions on single-story buildings, and the codification of New Urbanist design principles put in place to retain traditional main street characteristics allowed the neighborhood’s form to become more urban and take shape of what it once was.

**Organization and Concrete Change**

My findings suggest Elmwood’s metamorphosis and ultimate success today is a result of the neighborhood institution Forever Elmwood, and its later iteration, the Elmwood Village Association. Their ability was three fold. Under the early guidance of Michael Attardo and Michael Ferdman, Forever Elmwood organized the neighborhood’s residents under one body in order to initiate change, despite the negative conditions occurring in the area and the city. Through Michael Attardo’s leadership to take initiative and cleanup the neighborhood, people were drawn together. His innate abilities helped form Forever Elmwood. Attardo’s urban philosophy – his thoughts on how an urban neighborhood should exist - and relationships with the city mayor were vital to Elmwood’s change, and ultimately inspired his successor, Michael Ferdman. Such strength in leadership, and change as a result, aligns with other historical events involving “great men” (Harter, 2008)

Such change was seen through Forever Elmwood’s actions, where tangible results could be seen on the street. Widened sidewalks, a narrowed street bed, flower baskets, and garbage clean-up helped improve the quality of life for residents. Such action exemplifies the work of Jane Jacobs (1961), in ultimately understanding how the street functions in relation with people and the economy. How the street is formed effects how it functions and how people interact with
it and all of its components (buildings, sidewalks, stores, etc.). The changes in Elmwood Avenue allowed for people to see concretely the abilities and power of the institution, where it allowed Elmwood to separate itself as a neighborhood from other negative conditions occurring on the West and East Sides, and Buffalo as a whole.

In addition, Forever Elmwood provided governance through community dialogue that was seemingly missing from earlier years with the Elmwood Businessmen’s Association. Like other studies on localities and urban governance (Cox & Mair, 1988), Forever Elmwood was able to work with multiple interests and actors to develop. Rather than fight and have a multiplicity of interests, Forever Elmwood was able to address and attack the key issues at hand. While it could be argued as a homeowner association, due to its representation of residents and goals of increasing property values, it provides an interesting case compared to other institutions with private interests, such as homeowner associations (McKenzie, 1994). Ultimately, Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association were able to differentiate themselves as an institution that parsed out varied interests within the neighborhood and city.

Initial discussions on urban ills helped full Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association to alter the ways in which the area was seen. Efforts from these institutions allowed for Elmwood to slowly emerge as a safe and family-friendly place to live.

**Entrepreneurial Marketing and Branding: From the Strip to the Village**

As a result of Forever Elmwood’s abilities to alter the built environment and improve the neighborhood’s quality of life conditions, Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association needed to bring people back to the city to live and shop. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the goal was to draw people back into the city from the suburbs away from their mall
competitors. Both organizations were able to earn grants and establish important marketing and branding campaigns.

Further work by Forever Elmwood emerged to place both their constituents on the map: businesses and residents. Rather than simply including businesses of the strip, brochures began adding more dimension and included information on urban amenities and cultural institutions that were family-friendly. This turn from solely mapping businesses and retail helped all in the conceptualization of Elmwood as a village to occur.

Through best practices drawn from Seattle, Jessie Schnell-Fisher was able to bring the village concept to Elmwood, which is also seen in work on policy transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, 1996) and mobility (McCann, 2011). By eliminating the strip and linear perception of the street, the emergence of the Elmwood Village allowed the area to have dimension and include residents and families as one. This research furthers discussion on meaning creation of commercial streets in the United States through place branding and marketing (Pryor & Grossbart, 2007). It additionally extends and builds upon geographic research by examining the role of marketing and branding place with respect to economic geography where success occurred by creating and establishing a name (Miller & Olberding, 2014; Pike, 2013). These components additionally build upon research on commercial streets and their evolutions, such as those found in Roth & Grant (2015) and Grant & Gregory (2015).

**Planning Policy: The Elmwood Village Design Standards**

Findings further suggest that the creation and codification of the Elmwood Village Design Standards by Forever Elmwood and Buffalo’s City Council was important in planning for the retention of the neighborhood’s traditional main street and urban characteristics. As
would be predicted based on previous studies (Song & Gnap, 2004, 2003), such planning, built around New Urbanist design principles, allowed for the street to return to its previous urban form and also help increase surrounding property values through mixed-use construction.

Through restrictions on single-story buildings and further promotion of mixed-use buildings, the policy document allowed for past suburban structures that had dominated the Elmwood Strip to become the targets for change. Buildings such as the Kentucky Fried Chicken on Elmwood and Bryant, and the gas station at 905 Elmwood have now taken form as mixed-use, multiple story new builds. Additionally, the Blockbuster Video on Elmwood Avenue was converted into a Panera Bread, a Mexican and Tequila restaurant, and the popular Spot Coffee. Such changes indicate a desire to supply what is demanded by key demographics who are moving back to central cities going forward like Millennials. These changes further build upon the work of Ehrenhalt (2013) and Edlund et al. (2015), both of whom acknowledge the growing trend and push for central location in cities.

In addition, the emergence of new mixed-use buildings in Elmwood as a result of city policy further supplies residency for people coming into the area to work at the nearby Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus, as seen in many other economic cases built around education and medical campuses (Adams, 2003). Such construction builds upon discussion of the role that medical institutions have on the geography of development and location patterns of professionals and youth going forward.

**Future Research**

As a result of Elmwood’s success, preliminary findings suggest that places around the Buffalo-Region ranging in size and scope have drawn upon the “Elmwood Model”. By means of
urban actors, policy, best practices, and design, components of the Elmwood Village have been transferred and mobilized across space. Hertel Avenue, in North Buffalo, for instance, has been suggested as being the “New Elmwood” with similar buildings constructed on the street to those found in Elmwood. Grant Street, which has seen recent revitalization, has been compared to the Elmwood of old. Institutional organization and best practices have been transmitted to other commercial streets. In addition, the Buffalo Green Code has been modeled after the design and policy initiatives put in place in Elmwood. Such early findings may direct future research on the topic of policy transfer. Current research on policy transfer is more global in scope (McCann, 2011), where cities partake in interurban competition (McCann, 2004). However, study should be conducted on a regional level among commercial districts, which also seek economic growth and development. Additionally, the implications of Elmwood’s success are key for policymakers moving forward, in which other streets in Buffalo and the Rust Belt can learn from the planning doctrines that were used during its evolution. Future research looking at the redevelopment of inner-city commercial strips in other similar cities would help to validate and support these findings. Using similar analyses could be applicable to American cities such as Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Rochester, and even be appropriate for analyzing smaller cities in Southern Ontario.

Although a comprehensive geography of the Elmwood Village, its origins, and evolution has been provided, there is still much left to be studied on the area’s redevelopment. In particular, this thesis has lacked in-depth discussion specifically on storeowners’ thoughts moving into the future, especially with expected changes to come following the legislation of the Buffalo Green Code. While a few of my informants have owned retail establishments along Elmwood Avenue and others live and work in the immediate area, it would be important to do a
comprehensive study on the strip’s retailers especially with further development coming in the near future.

Furthermore, emergent themes suggest that Elmwood Avenue has slowly lost a gritty characteristic and is looking more-and-more sterile and mall-like due to the changes that have taken place. Discussion on small, local shops versus the emergence of chain stores and restaurants suggests one particular topic of discussion with Elmwood retailers and shop owners, especially amidst the plethora of new, mixed-use buildings with high commercial space rents, which could build upon work by Litvin & DiForio (2014) and Litvin & Jaffe (2010).

These questions and discussions with retailers can add new sources to the conversation on Elmwood’s redevelopment and could be included to show a more thorough picture of the changes that have taken place and the thought processes moving into the future. These findings can be elaborated upon to see the relationship between change and the economic cycles of commercial streets in the Rust Belt.

The Elmwood Village evolved into a successful neighborhood in the Rust Belt. Its evolution was fueled by two key institutions: Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Village Association. The emergence of Forever Elmwood in 1994 and the Elmwood Village Association in 2005 were vital in enabling residents to take action and partake in change. By organizing under one body, strong local governance occurred as a result of collective interests between businesses and residents. Such governance allowed for important changes to the built environment to take place, which positively affected the area’s change. In addition, marketing and branding schemes conducted by Forever Elmwood, and later, through the Elmwood Village Association, enabled the neighborhood and street to become a destination, an urban village, which helped allow the neighborhood to be an attractive and safe place for people and families to
live. Finally, the creation and codification of the Elmwood Village Design Standards allowed the evolution to come full circle. Restrictions on single-story buildings, and new urbanist best practices put in place to retain traditional main street characteristics allowed the neighborhood’s form to become more urban.

This case study traces the evolution of the Elmwood Strip to the Elmwood Village. It presents the economic success of this neighborhood where entrepreneurial practices (Harvey, 1989) and development tools (Sager, 2011) were utilized to rebrand a declining area in a creative (Atkinson & Easthope, 2009) and “cool” place to live (Zimmerman, 2008). Its branding differentiates itself among others by altering its governance and branding strategy to incorporate residents, simultaneously creating it as a neighborhood, rather than a commercial strip. Its accomplishment and redevelopment is applicable to other similar postindustrial commercial streets across the Rust Belt region, which can be seen through my results on the Elmwood Model.
References


Epstein, J. (2011). West Side Stories – Old neighborhoods are seeing signs of new life as both young and old homebuyers target once-neglected streets and drive up home values. *Buffalo News*. 6 November.


Taylor, E. (2007). ‘How does it feel to be 50 among the young and form, the strong and smooth on Elmwood, on Chippewa, at the Boulevard Mall?’ *Buffalo News*. 4 February.


Secondary Sources

Buffalo Police Department. (2001). *Buffalo Police Department: Workable Solutions to the Problem of Street Prostitution in Buffalo, NY.*

Appendix A

Archives

The following archives were accessed:
Buffalo & Erie County Public Library – Downtown Branch (Grosvenor Archives)
Buffalo & Erie County Public Library – Online
E.H. Butler Library Archive Collection, State University of New York College at Buffalo
Buffalo Rising – Online
Buffalo Business First - Online
Appendix B

Archival Material & Policy Documents

Buffalo News Articles
Buffalo Courier-Express Articles
Buffalo Rising Articles
Buffalo Business First Articles
Buffalo Green Code Draft (2014)
Elmwood Village Action Plan (October 1999)
Elmwood Village Zoning Recommendations (December 1999)
Elmwood Village Design Guidelines
City of Niagara Falls Downtown Housing Incentive Program
New York State Historic Tax Credit
New York State Partial Real Property Tax Exemption for Residential-Commercial (RP-485-a)
Appendix C

Interviews conducted August to December 2015

Robert Meredith, Vice President - Gurney, Becker & Bournes Real Estate,
Carly Battin, Executive Director, Elmwood Village Association (EVA),
Angela Keppel, Assistant Director, Elmwood Village Association (EVA),
Michael J. LoCurto, Former Councilman (Delaware District), Buffalo Common Council,
Judith Frizlen, Director - Rose Garden Education Center, Wife of Karl Frizlen
Martin DelleBovi, Executive Vice President & Director of Real Estate - Benchmark Group,
Joseph Golombek, Councilman (North District), Buffalo Common Council,
Daniel Leonard, Director of Regional Development - Buffalo-Niagara Partnership / VP for EVA,
Michael Ferdman, Partner - Barclay & Damon LLP / 2nd President of Forever Elmwood,
Michael Attardo, Owner - Get Dressed / Founder of Forever Elmwood,
David A. Rivera, Councilman (Niagara District), Buffalo Common Council,
Jessie Fisher, Executive Director - Preservation Buffalo Niagara / 3rd President - Forever Elmwood
Daniel Sack, EVA Design Committee Member
Rebecca Gandour, Director of Economic Development - City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning / Interim Executive Director (2012) for EVA
Harvey Garret, VP Global Change Delivery - HSBC / Executive Director for the West Side Community Collaborative
Newell Nussbaumer, Founder, Buffalo Rising Magazine
Jean-Michel Reed, Licensed Real Estate Broker - Gurney, Becker & Bournes Real Estate,
Rocco Termini, President - Signature Development
Mike McGuigan, Project Manager for 905 Elmwood
Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Introductory Text:
Hi, my name is Chris Willer and I am a graduate student in the Department of Geography at Kent State University. I am conducting an exploratory case study on the Elmwood Village’s evolution since 1990. The purpose of this research is to investigate how and why Elmwood has changed, as well as understand the spatial outcomes of possible spatial processes that influenced change. New urbanist and urban infill developments are being implemented in the Elmwood neighborhood of Buffalo, NY, which suggests a need to investigate the perceived economic and social outcomes of those policies and developments in the neighborhood.

Procedures: This interview will address your perspectives on the recent and past policies and developments along Elmwood Avenue. You will be asked to share your knowledge and opinions on the developments and changes.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Benefit: This research may not benefit you directly, however, your participation will deepen an understanding of development along commercial districts like Elmwood, and more broadly, in cities like Buffalo, NY.

Privacy and Confidentiality: Your responses will be confidential. In which case only the researchers involved in this study and those responsible for research oversight will have access to the information provide. Your responses will be numbered and the code linking your number with your name, should you provide it, will be stored in a secured computer and destroyed at the end of the research project, by no later than 12 months.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate, to end participation at any time for any reason, or to refuse to answer individual questions without penalty.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the co-investigator, Chris Willer (cwiller1@kent.edu), at any time. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature: I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

I give my permission for my name to be used by KSU. ____ No ____ Yes

I give my permission to be recorded by KSU. ______ No ____ Yes

____________________________________
Printed name

____________________________________
Date

____________________________________
Signature or (eSignature)

Please return this form to Chris Willer, Kent State University, Department of Geography, 413 McGilvrey Hall, Kent, Ohio 44242, Phone: 716-957-4587, Email: cwiller1@kent.edu.
Questions:

1. How old are you?

2. How long have you lived in the Buffalo region?
   a. The city?
   b. Elmwood Village?

3. How would you describe the Elmwood area before 2000? 1990?

4. What’s the difference between the Elmwood Strip and Elmwood Village?
   a. Why is it important?

5. Have you noticed any social (demographic) and/or economic changes in the neighborhood over the past 25 years? 10 years? 5 years?
   a. If you have seen changes, why have these changes occurred?

6. What has been the role of the Elmwood Village Association / Forever Elmwood in facilitating urban policies and developments?
   a. Why have they facilitated these policies and developments?
   b. What processes do these policies and developments go through? (How do they go into effect?)
      Through what institutions?
      i. Can you think of any conflicts, collaborations, etc. that have occurred along the way?

7. What has been the role of developers in facilitating urban policies and developments?
   a. See #5’s probes

8. What has been the role of the City of Buffalo (Common Council, Zoning Board of Appeals, Strategic Planning Department) in facilitating urban policies and developments?
   a. See #5’s probes

9. Why do you think mixed-use buildings been popping up in the Elmwood Village?
   a. Have you noticed any positives / negatives with the new developments?

10. How do you think the Buffalo Green Code will affect the Elmwood Village?

11. Is there anything else that you feel the need to tell me that I haven’t addressed?

Concluding Text: Thank you for participating in my study. Please let me know if you know anyone that would be good for me to talk to for my project, as well as if you’d be interested in being contacted again in the future.