ARTISTS AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF THE
LOWERTOWN ARTS DISTRICT AND THE KERNVILLE ARTS DISTRICT

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

Christopher W. Tartoni
June 2007
This thesis titled

ARTISTS AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF THE
LOWERTOWN ARTS DISTRICT AND THE KERNVILLE ARTS DISTRICT

by

CHRISTOPHER W. TARTONI

has been approved for

the Department of Geography

and the College of Arts and Sciences by

Nancy R. Bain
Professor of Geography

Benjamin M. Ogles
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Abstract

TARTONI, CHRISTOPHER W. M.A., June 2007, Geography

ARTISTS AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF THE
LOWERTOWN ARTS DISTRICT AND THE KERNVILLE ARTS DISTRICT

(102 pp.)

Director of Thesis: Nancy R. Bain

In this thesis, I employ a variety of methods to examine the changes in two neighborhoods, The Lowertown Neighborhood in Paducah, Kentucky and The Kernville Neighborhood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where each have recently launched programs designed to attract artists to renovate the housing stock. This thesis asks how these two arts districts were formed and what their morphology is, or how the physical form and the function of spaces that have been transformed. This thesis also examines the extent of gentrification that has occurred in Lowertown since the inception of the Artist Relocation Program in August of 2000. Throughout this thesis, comparisons are made to the SoHo (South Houston) Arts District in New York City, a thoroughly studied neighborhood that has experienced arts-driven revitalization and gentrification.

Approved: ___________________________________________________________

Nancy R. Bain

Professor of Geography
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Tom Barnett (Director of Planning in Paducah, KY), Jim White (Economic Development Coordinator for the City of Johnstown, PA), Mark Palmer (Artist), and Jay Downs Siska (Artist and author) for putting aside some time for their interviews. I would like to thank Char Downs for providing pictures from her and her husband’s book. I would also like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Timothy Anderson, Dr. Geoffrey Buckley, and Dr. Nancy Bain, for their suggestions and their guidance throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. William Kory and the rest of the Geography Department at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown for pushing me to the graduate level. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Nicole, for also pushing me to Ohio University, coming with me to Ohio University, and suggesting this idea for my thesis. If there is anyone I have left out, I would like to thank you too.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH SITES</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH METHODS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTLINE OF THESIS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATED TO ARTS DISTRICTS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCEPTUALIZING ART SPACE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFLICT, GENTRIFICATION, AND ARTS DISTRICTS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTS AS A TOOL FOR URBAN REDEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: THE FORMATION OF THE LOWERTOWN ARTS DISTRICT</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE LOWERTOWN ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM (PADUCAH, KENTUCKY)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE KERNVILLE ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM (JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS OF THE FORMATION OF BOTH ARTS DISTRICTS</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: THE MORPHOLOGY OF LOWERTOWN AND KERNVILLE</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MORPHOLOGY OF LOWERTOWN</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MORPHOLOGY OF KERNVILLE</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5: GENTRIFICATION AND THE LOWERTOWN ARTS DISTRICT</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTERISTICS OF ARTS DRIVEN GENTRIFICATION</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPPING GENTRIFICATION IN LOWERTOWN</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION OF GENTRIFICATION IN LOWERTOWN</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICISM, CONFLICT, AND GENTRIFICATION IN LOWERTOWN</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREVENTING ANOTHER SOHO</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Number of property transactions and average sale price year-by-year</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1 Location of The Lowertown Arts District</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2 Location of the Kernville Arts District</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1 Maps displaying median household income and median value of owner-occupied structures in Paducah</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2 Maps displaying percentage of renter-occupied structures and percentage of vacant units in Paducah</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3 Maps showing median household income and median value of owner-occupied structures in Johnstown</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4 Maps showing the percentage of renter-occupied units and percentage of vacant units in Johnstown</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1 Photo of Lowertown house markers</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2 Photo of the interior of the &quot;O&quot; Gallery</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3 Photo of the “O” Gallery during renovations</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4 Photo of the “O Gallery” after renovations</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.5 Photo of Lowertown’s Cowhouse during the 1937 flood</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.6 Photo of Lowertown’s Cowhouse renovated by an artists</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.7 Photo a decaying house</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.8 Photo of Figure 4.7 after renovations</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.9 Photo of Lowertown historic markers and lightpoles</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.10 Map of cultural facilities and festival spaces in Paducah</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.11 Photo of the exterior of Mark Palmer's Gallery</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.12 Photo of the exterior of Mark Palmer’s gallery after renovations</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.13 Photo of Mark Palmer's gallery space</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.14 Photo of Mark Palmer's living space</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.15 Photo of Mark Palmer's studio space</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.16 Zoning map of Kernville in 2005</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.17 Photo of The IDEAL Market in Kernville</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.18 Photo of a commercial structure in Kernville</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.19 Artist's rendition of the future of the Kernville Arts District</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.20 Map of cultural facilities and festival spaces in Johnstown and the region</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1 A map of artist’s former residence</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.2 Map representing the number of property transactions on a year-by-year basis and the sale prices of the properties in Lowertown</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.3 Map of population displacement in Lowertown</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Arts Districts provide artists with low cost living, working, and gallery space. Arts districts are usually found in once derelict portions of inner cities, where old houses and industrial buildings have been converted, through rehabilitation, into functional working and living spaces. The success of these districts depends on the cultural assets that they provide and through government programs that support the arts. These urban landscapes are transformed in the process both physically and socially.

In this thesis, I have studied the formation of the Lowertown Arts District and the Kernville Arts District, more specifically the individual persons, organizations, and the policy tools responsible for the formation. Second, I examined the transformed landscape of both districts: Which buildings have been renovated (or constructed)? What specifically are the spaces of activity? What cultural facilities are provided? Finally, I have attempted to identify the extent of gentrification in both districts.

I have two inspirations that led to this research. My wife is an artist and an art educator currently working at the Dairy Barn. Her dedication to her work, both as an artist and an educator, inspired me to pursue an idea related to her field. So I focused my research on an arts related subject in my fields of urban and cultural geography, and fittingly enough, arts districts was the perfect choice to incorporate the ideas of my fields of study with hers. I was a resident of the Kernville neighborhood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania before I moved to Maryland when I was 7. Though my mind was not geographically focused at this time, I did notice the decay that was occurring in the early 1980s. In the 1990s, city planners have targeted Kernville for redevelopment
opportunities, and though progress is slow, the number of ideas continues to grow as how to redevelop the neighborhood.

**Research Questions**

This thesis addresses three research questions: (1) how were these arts districts formed? (2) What is their morphology? And (3) To what extent has gentrification occurred in Lowertown?

The development of arts districts is becoming more of a reality for city planners as a tool for revitalizing downtowns, spurring economic development, and adding a cultural dimension to the city. Artists in need of a change from the big city life are seeking new locations to create and display their works. During the revitalization process, downtown landscapes are being transformed from areas of decay to areas of cultural and commercial growth. Not only are these arts districts providing cultural and commercial opportunities, but they are also providing artists with spaces where they can create, sell, and live in the same unit. It is important to note from the past that with opportunity comes criticism and conflict. Gentrification in places like SoHo in New York City have led artists in search of affordable living and working space, since being “priced out” by upper-class interest. And though this may not be the intention of newly formed arts districts in their plans, the signs of gentrification may already be showing. So with this, it is important to study the formation and landscape morphology of arts districts and the ramifications that may occur in the future.
Research Sites

The two study areas for this research are located in the Lower Town Arts District in Paducah, Kentucky, and the Kernville Arts District in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Both locations were once prosperous neighborhoods in old manufacturing cities in declining regions of the United States, but both have established arts districts to exhibit the history and heritage of their locations in addition to revitalizing these neighborhoods.

Brief History of the City of Paducah

Paducah, Kentucky is located in the far western end of the state at the confluence of the Ohio and the Tennessee Rivers. It was founded on April 27, 1827 by William Clark, Meriwether Lewis’ partner in the Lewis and Clark expeditions (Robertson 2004). In 1861, Paducah became a minor player in the civil war, where it was occupied by Union forces (Robertson 2004). During this occupation, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest raided Paducah twice in 1864, starting fires that burned many of the structures in the city, including those in Lowertown. Despite these raids, the city was able to prosper as an industrial city up until 1950. During the industrial revolution, Paducah served as a port for riverboat travelers and a manufacturing hub where factories produced bricks, steamboats, and locomotives.

Located at the shores of the Ohio River, flooding was a major problem during Paducah’s history. Several floods have plagued the city, with the worst occurring in 1937 cresting at 60.8 feet (Siska 2005). After the 1937 flood, plans were immediately drawn to build a flood wall to mitigate flooding. The project consisted of 13 pump stations, 9.3 miles of earth levee, and 3.1 miles of concrete and was completed in 1949 by the Army
Corp of Engineers (Siska 2005). By 1940, these floods in conjunction with the Great Depression caused an out-migration of residents, which slowed city growth. In the 1940s, a gaseous diffusion plant was built just outside of the city, bringing employment opportunities back to the city and doubling its population by 1950 (Robertson 2004). But as with many industrial cities, a period of decline struck Paducah through the 1960s to the early 1990s, and Lowertown’s image suffered from this period of decline as disinvestment of historic housing led to decay. The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program was brought about to revive Paducah’s oldest residential neighborhood by restoring these old historic homes and structures. See figure 1.1 for the location of Lowertown.
Brief History of Johnstown

Johnstown was founded in 1770 and became incorporated in 1800 by Joseph “Johns” Schantz (Berger 1984). Johnstown was very important in the industrial revolution, where iron-making factories were spread over the city and into the valley.

Two major developments started the “iron age” in Johnstown. One was the completion of the Pennsylvania Railroad main line, and the second was the founding of the Cambria Iron Company, both in 1852. The Cambria Iron Company was the leading producer of steel in the United States out-producing steel corporations in both Pittsburgh and
Cleveland and was the reason Johnstown was prosperous through the turn of the century and into the mid-1900s (Berger 1984).

Johnstown, much like Paducah, faced major flooding, with the worst occurring in 1889, where 2,200 people were killed (Berger 1984). And after the steel industry moved out of the region during the mid-1980s, the city went through a period of decline, where unemployment, out-migration, and disinvestment in historic homes accompanied the city’s decreasing population. Being a former resident of the Kernville neighborhood, I have witness the decline of this neighborhood first hand. Many small commercial establishments have either closed or moved to the suburbs, and many houses were torn down, including mine, during the blight removal period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. My old house was located in the section of Kernville where the new Conemaugh Technology Complex is being constructed today. See figure 1.2 for the location of Kernville.

Recently, Kernville has been the target of commercial enterprise because of its location to crucial institutions, including the Conemaugh Medical Center and the New Johnstown Convention Center. Kernville’s Artist Relocation Program is to be an addition to a neighborhood which has several different projects already on slate.
Research Methods

Census Data and GIS Data

Census data was gathered for studying the initial conditions at both research sites before each arts district was established. This neighborhood data was compared to city and national averages. Since the last census was taken after the establishment of both arts districts, other methods were employed to analyze the gentrification that has occurred in Lowertown.

I was also able to obtain GIS data at the parcel level for the Lowertown neighborhood. The details of this data and the methods I used for the mapping study are
detailed in chapter 5. This data was helpful in tracking the property transactions, sale prices for the properties, and measuring population displacement after the Lowertown Arts District was established.

**Literature, Newspaper, and Web Search**

The Lowertown Arts District website has links to articles published in arts journals and newspapers, which can be used to gather information on the Artist Relocation Program, the main policy tool for attracting artists to Lowertown. The main purpose of these articles was to examine formation factors in the revitalization of Lowertown. The same method was used in analyzing the Kernville Arts District, but the number of articles is far less than the case of Lowertown.

I also have an online subscription to the “Paducah Sun,” the main newspaper for the region with many articles concerning the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program. These articles will help in identifying specific details and situations that have occurred from the start of the program to today.

**Observations and Photographs**

I had the chance to spend the weekend in Lowertown last November (2006). I was able to walk around and take several pictures of houses that have been fully renovated, houses undergoing renovations, and noticed a few houses that were still untouched. Historic pictures were provided by Jay Downs Siska and Char Downs from their book *Then & Now: Lower Town, Paducah* (2005). I also made a several visits to Kernville to see if I can identify any changes. I was able to take some photographs and take notes on
the conditions of this neighborhood. These observations were done to support any facts
that have been written in articles.

Interviews

Four interviews were conducted during this research; two with artists and one
with the head coordinator of each site. I asked questions pertaining to the formation
process, mainly about the main policy tool used; The Artist Relocation Program. I also
asked about concerns of gentrification, if they existed. And I also talked the two artists
about what brought them to Paducah and from where. These interviews were done to
provide any new information that the articles and the websites did not provide.

Outline of Thesis

Chapter 2 examines some of the literature that has led to my research questions
and my methodologies. Chapter 3 examines the formation of both the Lowertown Arts
District and the Kernville Arts District. Similarities and differences are identified
between each, including SoHo. Chapter 4 discusses the physical changes that have
occurred in both Lowertown and Kernville. This chapter covers how zoning plays a role
in each district’s morphology. Chapter 5 focuses on the gentrification occurring in
Lowertown. Because of the lack of census data, I analyzed GIS data from the City of
Paducah to assist in drawing conclusions with other forms of data, including interviews
and journal and newspaper articles. I also comment on some of the criticisms of the
Lowertown Artist Relocation Program. The final chapter summarizes my findings and
provides avenues for additional research.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATED TO ARTS DISTRICTS

The literature concerning arts districts is evolving at this point, with more literature being produced as more cities are planning arts districts. Most of the recent literature comprises of case studies done in separate cities that provide the basic information about how they are formed and who is supporting these projects, but they offer little concerning landscape changes and social issues, including gentrification. The selected literature for this review refers to such social issues and landscape changes that are brought about by the creation of arts districts.

In the fields of Urban Geography and Urban Planning, and even Cultural Geography, much has been written on downtown revitalization, and gentrification. But again, only a handful uses an arts district as a concentration. Much of the literature in this review comes from the fields of sociology and economics. Urban Geography incorporates both disciplines, in addition to others, as does this review. Urban Planning literature concentrates on the policy tools for the formation process and is covered in the final section of this review.

First, I review the idea of art spaces; what they are and why they are important to understand. In the second section, I examine literature concerning the case of the SoHo (South Houston) Arts District and the Lower East Side, two landscapes in New York City that have morphed from old industrial neighborhoods into places of art galleries and museums and finally upper-class neighborhoods. This section also covers the gentrification that has occurred in these districts. The final section covers the urban planning perspective of arts districts, including cultural development plans and economic development.
Conceptualizing Art Space

Art spaces are not just the old industrial lofts that artists live and work in, but they also include the entire community. Art spaces are important for study because these are the spaces that are changing the urban landscape structurally and socially. All of the literature concerning arts districts is a commentary on the changes that these art spaces went through.

Established Interpretations of Art Space

Chang and Lee (2003) conceptualize and simplify what art spaces are through different interpretations. Chang and Lee generalizes the idea of art spaces as “taking physical forms, either as spaces for artists to learn and create (like schools, studios, residence) or for artworks and the arts to be presented (like museum, theaters, and public area)” (Chang and Lee 2003: 129). But not only do art spaces take physical form, but the landscape can also be read for its meanings about social identities and significance of place.

Chang and Lee’s interpretation is closely related to Sharon Zukin’s interpretation of art spaces. Zukin (1982) coined title “The Loft Terrain” to describe the transformation of the old industrial lofts into high end apartments geared toward upper-class residents. These artist lofts, according to Zukin, were spaces of work, residence, and social interaction. In her study of the SoHo Arts District (which is further examined in the next section), art spaces are seen in terms of production and consumption. Simply, production spaces are spaces where art is produced, and the industrial lofts provided adequate space for working artist at a very affordable price. As the production of art became profitable,
more galleries opened in SoHo, and when the rise of rents in the lofts increased, art spaces became spaces of consumption, where upper-class investment brought in great amounts of capital and eventually upper-class non-artist residents.

Inner-City Space and Culture

Art space is more associated with the central city than with the suburbs in most of the academic literature. David Ley (2002) points to factors other than economic or market-driven that draw poor artists to inner-city spaces. His statistical study of Montreal and its suburban area suggests a polarization of population between artists in the suburbs and in the inner-city. In an interview with an artist in Vancouver reveals the importance of an inner-city location:

Artists need authentic locations. You know artists hate the suburbs. They’re too confining. Every artist is an anthropologist, unveiling culture. It helps to get some distance on that culture in an environment that does not share all of its presuppositions, an old area, socially diverse, including poverty groups. (Ley 2002: 2534)

Low rents in inner-city locations are a major factor in an artist’s decision to locate, but Ley suggests that artist’s tastes also determine the choice of space. “For the aesthetic disposition, commodified locations, like commercialized art, are regarded as sterile, stripped of meaning: ‘there’s nothing for me there’” (Ley 2002: 2535). Ley’s study also suggests that artist lofts are rarely popular (or affordable) because they are not seen as “authentic” but rather “commodified.”
Conflict, Gentrification, and Arts Districts

The SoHo Arts District

The most documented case study of an arts district is SoHo in New York City (Kostelanetz 2003, Simpson 1981, and Zukin 1982). These three authors document the changes in the neighborhood from the 1950s through the 1980s; from an old derelict neighborhood to an “artist colony,” and finally a high-end commercial district. To Simpson, SoHo was important in urban analysis for several reasons. First, “SoHo is an ecologically differentiated area in which occupational necessity and structural obsolescence of buildings have given rise to a new housing form—loft as studio and residence” (Simpson 1981: 9-10). SoHo was also a product of government zoning concessions and land-use policies which artists and their allies have lobbied to create (Simpson 1981). “SoHo demonstrates that the ‘administrative’ component of urban communities can be responsive to spontaneous land-use change backed by the political activism of citizens” (Simpson 1981: 10).

In all three accounts, the conversion of old industrial buildings as working and living space was the first phase in the history of artists in SoHo. Many artists were attracted to the old derelict lofts because of the large amount of available space and the low cost of this space ($100 a month or sometimes lower) (Kostelanetz 2003). Many of these lofts were industrial sweatshops and other factories that have either moved into suburban locations or went out of business. “Even if the space was not zoned for legal residence, the working artists could spend the night. The rules allowed a shower, but not a bathtub; a hot plate, but not a stove; and anything resembling a bed needed to be hidden away if the city buildings’ inspector knocked” (Kostelanetz 2003: 10). Though
“somewhat” illegal for residence, these lofts offered artists space, while providing landlords with income.

These lofts were subject for demolition because of “urban renewal” movements including the addition of an expressway, so artists needed to lobby for a special zoning ordinance which allowed them “to live and not just work” in these buildings legally. A lobby group called the Artists Tenants Association was just the political backing that was needed to allow artist residence. Artists in SoHo had fought for an identity, and “the increasing number of artists and the growing publicity surrounding their residency inevitably made their occupancy a political issue” (Simpson 1981: 2), giving them an identity that would sculpt urban planning in New York.

Zukin (1982) notes that the arts in SoHo gained a good amount of state support because of the “commodification,” or the commercial popularity of the arts. From 1965 on, the number of art jobs in state-supported institutions multiplied greatly. Government grants for arts activities rose from nearly nothing to a multi-million dollar “industry” (Zukin 1982). The state also indirectly contributed to artistic careers through support for higher education, which encouraged many young people to go to college than in years past. It is these events that Zukin, as well as other authors, says have transformed some artists in SoHo from the poor working-class to the white-collar middle-class.

Gentrification in SoHo came in two phases, which were documented by all three authors. The first phase of gentrification occurred as the influx of aspiring artists moving into SoHo displaced the old working-class constituency of employees in the factories that were left over during the latter half of the 1950s. The second phase occurred during the heightened commodification of the arts, where wealthier artists and upper-class non-
artists were displacing the original artists that moved into SoHo, after loft rental prices escalated. Lofts that were priced at $100 a month in the early 1960s were rented for $700 a month in the 1980s after renovations (Simpson 1981). Artist who were well established landlords were able to stay, while less wealthy artist were “bought out” by middle and upper-class non-artist populations and were forced to move to other low cost rent areas around the periphery of New York City, including Hoboken, Jersey City, and Newark (Cole 1987). Also, a community of art galleries and establishments, which catered to the artist lifestyle, was being replaced by high-end clothing and restaurants that were “cunningly exploiting the neighborhoods’ reputation for advanced taste” (Kostelanetz 2003: 225). The mission of sustaining artists and their functional contribution to the city would become an aberration of the past” (Simpson 1981: 243).

The Lower East Side

According to Smith (1996), the beginning of the transformation to an arts district began in the late 1970s, two decades after SoHo, when an influx of artists began taking residence in deteriorated tenement dwellings built in the late nineteenth century. In the early 1980s, the area became greatly institutionalized and over seventy galleries opened shop (Smith 1996). The Lower East Side was a melting pot of culture, where yuppies and punks mingled with the Ukrainian and African-American working class as well as the homeless (Smith 1996). In 1976, a period of revitalization was beginning in the Lower East Side, and in 1982, the total number of households increased; a sign of reinvestment according to Smith. Smith’s analysis suggests as much as a six year lag between the earliest reinvestment and repopulation, and “offers further empirical
evidence to support the thesis that economic shifts lead to demographic change in the
gentrification process” (Smith 1996: 200). As with SoHo, investment opportunities in the
late 1980s took the shape of corporate high rises, condominiums, and high-end retail
establishments.

But even before the second stage of reinvestment transformed the Lower East
Side into a high-rise district, Deutsche and Ryan (1984) were commenting on the first
wave of gentrification involving the influx of artists and the cities urban renewal
strategies. Deutsche and Ryan believed that urban renewal strategies concealed a “brutal
reality,” where the city planned to use the commodification of the arts industry to drive
out the impoverished working-class and the homeless from the Lower East Side.

“To portray artists as the victims of gentrification is to mock the plight of the
neighborhood’s real victims,” and “the best thing the artist of this city can do for the
people of the Lower East Side is to go elsewhere” (Deutsche and Ryan 1984: 104).
Zukin and Deutsche and Ryan are in agreement with the thesis of who the victims of
gentrification are. According to Zukin, “the real victims of gentrification are not
residents (artists) at all but rather the small-scale industrial and commercial firms and
their workers whose premises were converted to residential use” (Zukin 1982: 5).

Other Studies of Importance

Hoboken, Newark, and Jersey City, according to Cole (1987), have experienced
the same gentrification processes as those in SoHo and the Lower East Side. Artists have
been drawn to these peripheral cities in the mid-1980s because they were “priced out” of
SoHo and the Lower East Side where rental prices became unaffordable for poorer artists.
Another consequence of gentrification, which Cole points to, is the idea of ownership versus renting. As with the case in Soho, those artists who owned their property could survive neighborhood changes, while the renters were forced out. Other artists become “speculators by selling their property for several times more and become successful landlords themselves” (Cole 1987: 404).

Cole’s study provides two lines of insight. One is a diffusion process from the commodified New York neighborhoods to neighborhoods that resemble those in Soho and the Lower East Side before the art boom. This diffusion suggests a cyclic process, where the artists are always on the move unless capital success is obtained. Secondly, artists play an important role in urban regeneration even though most artists do not stay around long enough to see their influence.

Artists become an important group of the urban pioneers who exemplify not only that an area is “safe” by middle-class standards but also that it has acquired a style or flair that can be capitalized on by both developers and new residents. Many city administrators are convinced that cities benefit from the improved cultural life that artists initiate and that city prestige is enhanced. In doing so, they are often forced by rising rents to repeat the process. (Cole 1987: 404)

Stuart Cameron and Jon Coaffee (2005) suggest a third stage of gentrification, a concept derived from Hackworth and Smith (2000), where public policy is the main driver in gentrification producing an engine of urban renewal in Gateshead, in the United Kingdom. In this review, two stages of gentrification have been discussed so far. The first is initiated by artist moving into dilapidated industrial neighborhoods, and the second occurred as “capital follows the artist into gentrified localities, commodifying its cultural assets and displacing the original (artists) gentrifiers” (Cameron and Coaffee
The first two waves suggest “natural” (or unplanned) processes, while the gentrification is part of the planning process in the third wave.

In 1986, the Borough of Gateshead implemented the Art in Public Places Programme, which was “an innovative collaboration between public and private sectors in developing large-scale ‘environmental sculptures’ and ‘decorative artwork’ often linked to industrial heritage and traditional ways of living” (Cameron and Coaffee 2005: 48). The aim of this program was to enhance the overall landscape architecture and to enhance the social and community benefits of arts-based regeneration. Neighborhood and Housing Market Renewal were goals to be achieved by the program, with improvements in affordable housing stock and façade improvements in the Quayside District of Gateshead.

**Arts as a Tool For Urban Redevelopment**

**City Centers as Idea Locations**

Johnathan Barnett (2003) suggests that city centers have advantages compared to suburban locations for cultural activities and arts districts. Barnett suggests the inventory of old historical structures in city centers can be utilized by planners and developers as assets. Historic preservation, according to Barnett, has helped cities reclaim and restore the old buildings that were once thought to be encumbering. Barnett covers examples of cities restoring old warehouses and converting them into cultural facilities to anchor arts districts. Barnett says that these cultural facilities are created “to make sure that downtown has the ability to draw visitors and suburbanites” (Barnett 2003: 194). Barnett
also suggests that these cultural facilities along with other attractions (ballparks and retail districts) are critical in keeping city centers competitive with the suburbs.

The Formation of an Arts District

Frost-Kumpf (2001) and her study of 20 U.S. cities examines the formation, morphology, and management of arts districts. In this section, I only concentrate on the formation factors, however, my thesis examines the morphology aspects as well. Formation, in Frost-Kumpf’s study refers to the planning and implementation and is affected by the initial landscape of the district, redevelopment issues, leadership, organizational factors, motivation for the creation of the district, and the various policy and planning tools chosen.

In her analysis, most of the districts were built around existing cultural facilities, mainly museums and old historical buildings. Many of these facilities, along with the neighborhood around them, were decaying. Another common characteristic of arts districts is their proximity to convention and meeting spaces, as well as festival retail markets, sports complexes, parks, waterfronts, and the city’s CBD. Another factor of consideration is the “extent, type, and condition of residential development present in the target site. Some targeted sites have very little housing, while others are in the middle of residential neighborhoods” (Frost-Kumpf 2001: 29). Zoning is an important factor in the creation of an arts district, where it “can either inhibit or promote the type of growth desired for the district” (Frost-Kumpf 2001: 30). Special zoning is required for a district that wants to promote a living and a working space in the same structure.
Arts district formation has a number of “instigators,” including arts and artist organizations, local growth coalitions, and downtown business groups. Relationships between these groups and the local government are key in the formation and the stability of these arts districts, and historic preservation interests are also common in the development of an arts district. Motivations for creating an arts district include attracting visitors and investment in a city that is losing development to the suburbs, generating business, eliminating crime, providing living and working spaces for artists interested in settling, and the enhancement of the city as a place of creativity and artistic prowess (Frost-Kumpf 2001). Policy tools used in the formation include changes in zoning ordinances, street paving, landscaping, lighting, and other façade improvement within the designated district.

Economic Development

According to Rhonda Phillips, “the arts as related to community economic development can be defined as: (1) an industry comprised of individuals, institutions, and organizations functioning as businesses interrelated with other local and regional businesses; (2) wide-ranging to specific cultural amenities; and (3) cultural education, tools, policies, and processes” (Phillips 2004: 22). There are several types of community development programs that arts districts have used, including arts business incubators, arts cooperatives, tourist venues, and comprehensive approaches. Incubation programs are an economic development tool designed to foster a community’s business development efforts. The approach includes shared administrative and other services, centralized space, and business development assistance provided in a facility where new
or young small businesses co-exists (Phillips 2004). Arts cooperatives are a group of local or regional artisans forming non-profit organizations to market and promote their works, and the arts tourist venue approach explicitly develops arts programs to support tourism. Phillips notes that care must be taken with the tourism approach so that over-commercialization does not threaten community ambience. Comprehensive approaches interweave the arts into the overall community development strategy. Though this thesis does not focus on economic development, Phillips’ study points to a variety of options to consider in the formation of arts districts.

Cultural Development Planning

Nancy Moses (2001) investigates how cultural attractions, like museums and performing arts centers, can be a catalyst for urban growth and devises a plan for cultural development. These museums and performing arts centers serve as anchors for downtown commercial and residential development, as Barnett (2003) has suggested. She offers some keys to cultural development planning, or what a good cultural development plan takes into consideration. With a community’s vision and identity, cultural development plans use a community’s unique identity to create a sense of place and a position in the marketplace. An inventory of cultural assets is also essential for a good cultural development plan.

This kind of inventory analyzes the capstone experiences that make the community an appealing place to live and visit. It targets organizations with the greatest potential for growth, while identifying the mix of new elements and experiences needed to underscore the community’s identity and to enliven the experience. (Moses 2001: 31)
From the planning perspective, there is a need to learn from the past to plan for the future. First, there is a need to understand what spaces are subject for transformation and what the outcomes may be. We need to know the aesthetic value of these spaces so when it comes time for a plan, these spaces can be shaped to fit these aesthetic values without commodifying them; that is the importance of understanding art spaces.

Gentrification is important to note because artists may be priced out of newly formed arts districts if precautions are not taken to prevent this from happening. So studying SoHo and the Lower East Side becomes an important case for planners to see what may come of residents currently living in these districts once they have been established. Planners need to understand the factors in the formation of an arts district, and planners also need to understand some of the policy tools and strategies for the success of these arts districts if they are to revive their downtowns through cultural planning.

Larger cities, such as New York, are attractive study areas, but there is much to learn from the smaller cities in America. Smaller cities are becoming more attractive for artists because of the low cost of living and the idea of escaping the big city. There is a need to understand how these arts districts are formed; who is initiating the project, what the motivations are, and what policy tools are being implemented. It is important to observe the changes in the landscape due to the creation of an arts district; landscaping, zoning, and other spaces of activity. With more cities turning to the arts as a revitalization driver, the literature in this review discusses issues within these arts districts and perspectives on how to use the arts in the revitalization process.
CHAPTER 3: THE FORMATION OF THE LOWERTOWN ARTS DISTRICT
AND THE KERNVILLE ARTS DISTRICT

Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter focuses on the formation of both the Lowertown Arts District and the Kernville Arts District. It is important to understand the circumstances that triggered the idea to revitalize these neighborhoods through the arts. In each case, there are specific persons, organizations, and situations that brought about their creation and the transformations that have followed. The method of analysis will be based on Hillary Anne Frost-Kumpf’s methods, where she gathered an inventory of 20 U.S. cities, examining in general, the formation, the morphology, and the management of these arts districts (2001). My study focuses on the formation in this chapter and the morphology in chapter 4.

The Lowertown Arts District was created in August of 2000, while the Kernville Arts District was formed in 2006. The formation of an arts district is simply the planning process and the implementation (Frost-Kumpf 2001). Both districts are employing a program called the “Artist Relocation Program” as a strategy for recruiting artists to revitalize old historic homes while continuing their own careers in creating art through certain incentives, which are exclusive to interested artists. First, I examine the initial conditions of each research site, describing each neighborhood before the inception of the arts districts. Both Lowertown and Kernville were neighborhoods plagued with blighted structures, little code enforcement, and crime. I also state and analyze the benefits and the stipulations of each neighborhood’s Artist Relocation Program. Both evolved from the same idea, but there is some variation between the two. I also inventory the cultural
assets that the City of Paducah and Johnstown provide in their respective regions. As mentioned in Chapter 2, cultural assets are basically an inventory of attractions that give a city a cultural image and project the city as an appealing place to visit and live (Moses 2001). Finally, I analyze the differences between the formation of these two districts and the arts districts in the literature, more specifically SoHo.

**The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program (Paducah, Kentucky)**

**The Formation of the Lowertown Arts District and the Artist Relocation Program**

*Initial Conditions*

The formation of the Lowertown Arts District can be traced to two individuals. One of these individuals is Mark Barone, an artist who moved to Paducah in 1992, and the other individual is Tom Barnett, the current director of the Department of Planning for the City of Paducah, who moved to the city in 1994. Both of them arrived in Lowertown during a time of degeneration. Many of the old structures, which included old Victorian Italianate and Queen Anne houses, were seen as difficult to maintain, less efficient, and were not up to new housing standards, so landlords (or slumlords) began buying these large structures, splitting them into apartments, and rented them to anyone, sometimes by the week (Barnett 2006). During the late 1990s, Lowertown “had pockets of gentrification but was still in dire need of revitalization” (Frankel 2001: 13).

The census data confirms these initial observations. Most of Lowertown is part of the 0303 Census Tract, Block Group 2, with two or three blocks seeping into surrounding block groups. Median Household Income in the Lowertown Census Block Group in 1990 was $8,863 and $16,250 in 2000, both considerably low compared to the rest of
McCracken County and lower than the U.S. average, which was $30,056 in 1990 and $41,994 in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000). The percentage of rental structures in the Lowertown Census Block Group was one of the highest in McCracken County (73% in the 2000 Census). “People who lived in a building on any given day usually didn’t live there the year before” (Barnett 2006). See figures 3.1 and 3.2 for maps displaying housing characteristics in the City of Paducah.

There were little attempts to preserve Lowertown during the 1980s. During this time, Lowertown was zoned as a historic district, which helped stabilize the condition of the homes but not improve the condition, and lenient code enforcement added to the deterioration of these structures (Patton 2006). “There was no proactive initiative, and there certainly was no grand vision of how to improve Lowertown” (Patton 2006: 56). The turning point in the planning and implementation process of the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program occurred in 1999, when Mark Barone witnessed a drug deal across the street from his house (White 2003, Patton 2006). Barone says “we needed to save the neighborhood. Either the city was getting on board or I was getting the hell out” (Patton 2006: 57). Mark went to the city and pitched his idea of an artist relocation program, and from the there, work was done to bring his ideas to reality.
Figure 3.1 Maps displaying median household income and median value of owner-occupied structures in Paducah. Map created by author.

Figure 3.1 Maps displaying percentage of renter-occupied structures and percentage of vacant units in Paducah. Maps created by author.
The Formation Process

Mark was hired, part-time (though it was really a full-time job), by the city to work with Tom Barnett in planning their vision for Lowertown. One of the first initiatives was more stringent code enforcement and a rental licensing ordinance, that required landlords to have a license in order to be in the business of having rental property, and it also required that the structures also be inspected once every two years (Barnett 2006). Fines would be given to those who could not keep up with the codes, and they were cumulative; the longer the property was not maintained, the higher the fines would be (Barnett 2006). “Mark worked pretty hard with Steve Dolittle, the director of Planning in Paducah at that time, to get some of these codes passed” (Barnett 2006).

The initial design for the Artist Relocation Program was inspired by a small relocation program in Rising Sun, Indiana, just outside of Cincinnati, Ohio. Rising Sun is a very small town, which serves as the county seat of Ohio County, Indiana. Ohio County is the smallest county in Indiana (88.43 square miles) and has a population of 5,623, and Rising Sun itself has a population of 2,470 (http://www.enjoyrisingsun.com/facts.php). Since the program started in 1998, the town has had a handful of buildings revitalized for arts purposes and a handful of artists that have relocated from other parts of the country (Bradley 2000e). Looking at Rising Sun’s website, there are nine galleries and a few artists listed. A group from the city, which included Mark Barone and Tom Barnett, paid a visit to Rising Sun to get some ideas.
The Mayor sent Mark and I with the city manager and one of the commissioners to go look at the project there and to see if it had any legs. So we went there and looked at it, and realized it was something we could do and do a whole lot better. Paducah was a lot bigger, we had more culture, we had artists in the museums, we had a performing arts center coming online, and we had the quilt museum; lots and lots of things that would add to that credibility if we started inviting artists to our town. (Barnett 2006)

It would be the design from Rising Sun, catered for the city of Paducah, from which Mark Barone and Tom Barnett would mold the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program.

The city began to acquire property from those landlords who could not keep up with the codes and properties that were ready for demolition. The first year budget for the program was $46,000, $16,000 of which was for Mark Barone’s salary. “The rest of the money was used to buy some properties, fix some properties, advertising and so on” (Barnett 2006). These acquired properties would then be sold to artists interested in being a part of the program and were sold at a relatively low price. Mark Palmer, an artist who relocated from Washington D.C. bought his property for $1 after the city purchased the building for $800 dollars (Barnett 2006) and paid over $40,000 to repair the building, “re-bricking the building and putting new floor joists to secure the building because it was ready for demolition” (Palmer 2006). And this process was going on throughout Lowertown in the early stages of the Program.

Incentives of the Paducah Artists Relocation Program

One of the major roadblocks in the process of converting Lowertown into an artist’s destination was how to attract artists from all over the country. For this problem, the program offers a variety of incentives in hope of bringing artists to the community.
Included in this package of incentives are financial loans and grants, health care packages, and nationwide marketing, along with the cultural assets that the region offers. Paducah Bank is a major component to the Artist Relocation Program offering much of the financial incentives for properties bought and financed in Lowertown. The Artist Relocation Program’s website (http://www.paducaharts.com) provides a short synopsis of these program incentives, while also providing house listings, a list of artists, events in Lowertown, and more.

Financial Incentives

Paducah Bank offers many of the financial incentives in the program, including low interest loans. The program promotes ownership rather than renting, so artists applying for a loan must have good credit and a steady income to qualify for these loans (Hambrick 2003). The basic interest rate for the loan is 7% for 30 years, but each applicant is screened on an individual basis (Patton 2006). The bank also offers artists loan-to-value ratios up to 100 percent for rehabilitation (Hambrick 2003). And Paducah Bank has agreed to offer loans with values higher than the actual appraisal of a house, “sometimes as high as 400 percent over the appraised value” (Patton 2006: 58). This was a risk to the bank, which I explain later in this chapter. The bank has also been involved in property acquisition process in Lowertown along with the city, providing more choices for artists interested in moving to Lowertown (Barnett 2006). The city is also involved in the financial process, offering a $2,500 grant to help artists cover professional rehabilitation fees such as architecture consultations or landscape drawing plans (Patton 2006).
Tax Incentives

Included in the Artist Relocation Program are tax incentives that benefit artists. Tax incentives are a cultural resource that has found successes in many urban settings (Singer 2000). The Federal Historic Preservation Tax offers a 20 percent tax credit for the “certified rehabilitation of certified historic structures” (Pouge 2001). And probably more important to the rehabilitation of historic homes and the construction of new ones is that Lowertown is part of an economic development zone, where all materials purchased for construction and rehabilitation are not taxed (Patton 2006, Siska 2007).

Non-monetary Incentives

There are several non-monetary incentives included in the program that assist in attracting new artists to Lowertown. The Kentucky Arts Council offers health insurance, which includes six different plans (Pouge 2001). Through Frontier Communications, artists are given server space to create personal websites at no charge (Pouge 2001). Artists are also marketed locally, regionally, and nationally through print advertising and assistance by the Visitor’s Bureau and the Tourism Bureau of Paducah (Pouge 2001). Much of the advertising can be seen in the arts journals consulted in this research.

“We’re advertising more in Chicago, St. Louis, Nashville and now we are reaching out to Louisville and Lexington, doing radio ads on their NPR stations and doing print media” (Palmer 2006). Lowertown has also received national attention through television spots on ABC News, which aired December 23, 2006, and the television program, “This is America with Dennis Wholey” has featured four episodes about the Artist Relocation Program over the past 5 years.
This show (This is America) airs in 164 countries and reaches 29 million people. Anyone who sees the shows knows that Paducah Bank and the city of Paducah…they’re seeing this city prosper. And you’ll get different perspectives from wherever we’re advertised, from an urban planning perspective, economic and of course, art. So we get all this free advertising. (Palmer 2006)

Financial incentives, tax incentives, and advertising played an integral role in attracting artists to Lowertown, and these incentives along with the work put together in planning the program by Mark Barone and Tom Barnett are key in the formation of the Lowertown Arts District. Also key in this formation are the organizations involved with the program, especially Paducah Bank.

Cultural Assets in the Paducah Region

Another way Lowertown has attracted artists and visitors is promoting their cultural assets. The increasing number of galleries is one of the cultural assets that Lowertown has to offer, but this idea stretches beyond the borders of the neighborhood; into downtown and throughout the city. The identification and promotion of the cultural assets in and around Lowertown has given Paducah the image of a cultural destination for visitors and artists looking to settle.

Two of the major cultural assets in Paducah are The Luther F. Carson Four Rivers Performing Arts Center and the National Quilt Museum, both within walking distance of the Lowertown Arts District. The Carson Center (as it is now called) opened in February of 2004 and is an ideal venue for the artists of Lowertown to perform. It is home to the Paducah Symphony Orchestra and has hosted legends like Vince Gill and B.B. King (Artec Consultants Inc. http://www.artec-usa.com). The National Quilt Museum (or
Museum of the American Quilter’s Association) and its annual show, “Arts in Actions,”
draws a crowd of nearly 30,000 people yearly from all parts of the country (Backer 2002,
White 2003). Other cultural attractions in Paducah are the River Heritage Museum, The
Market House Theatre, and the Yeiser Art Center. These and other cultural facilities are
mapped in figure 4.10.

The Kernville Artist Relocation Program (Johnstown, Pennsylvania)
The Formation of the Kernville Arts District and The Artist Relocation Program

Initial Conditions

As with Lowertown, the Kernville Neighborhood of Johnstown has been fighting
blight to revitalize the neighborhood. Starting in the early 1990s, The Johnstown
Redevelopment Authority has been active in revitalizing small sections of Kernville. In
1991, demolition began on a section of the neighborhood called “Robb Alley,” where old
multi-unit structures were decayed and posed safety concerns for those living within
them. The Redevelopment Authority became the first agency in Pennsylvania to use the
Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) funding to finance the clearing of blighted
properties for commercial redevelopment (The Johnstown Redevelopment Authority:
http://www.johnstown-redevelopment.org/kernvilletif.htm). Today, the site is home to
several commercial establishments, including Hite Electric and The White Star Personal
Care Facility in a complex known as Napoleon Place (named after the street adjacent to
the complex). Work was also done on restoring one of the city’s historic houses, the
Walter R. Myton House, which is located in the old Robb Alley block. The Robb Alley
block is located adjacent to the Johnstown Central Business District (Downtown), which
holds the War Memorial and the New Johnstown Convention Center. Though this one block of Kernville has been improved to accommodate commercial firms, the rest of Kernville was still seen as a blighted neighborhood.

Kernville used to be a prosperous neighborhood early in its history, where the homes were built by wealthy businessmen (Faher and Piatek 2005). According to the Johnstown city directory, Kernville had 75 businesses on Franklin Street in 1955. That figure fell to 65 by 1975 and 40 in the 2004 directory (Faher and Piatek 2005). Among these lost businesses were two major dairy distributors, which includes the relocations of the Galliker Dairy Co. in 1973 and Sani-Dairy in 1999 (Faher and Piatek 2005). The population of Kernville has also been affected by the deterioration of the neighborhood. According to the 2000 Census, 40 percent of the residents were living under the poverty level. The total population of Kernville also fell from 2,019 in 1990 to 1,352 in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000) (not mapped). Median Household Income was one of the lowest in the 14 Johnstown census tracts at $10,298 in 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000). The Median Household Income did increase to $18,725 in 2000, but was still on the low end compared to the other neighborhoods (U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000). The number of housing units in Kernville has decreased between the two censuses (from 1,206 in 1990 to 823 in 2000), and the number of vacant spaces decreased from 36% in 1990 to 25% in each census (U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000). During this period, blight removal in Kernville was well under way. Other housing variables have been mapped in figures 3.3 and 3.4.

Because of this period of decline in the neighborhood, city officials have made strides in reviving the neighborhood through various means. “City leaders see geography
as one of the neighborhood’s chief advantages. It nestles snugly against Johnstown’s Central Business District, and Franklin Street serves as a vital city artery—not to mention the prime link between Memorial Medical Center’s two campuses” (Faher and Piatek 2005). Today, commercial development seems to be springing up around every corner in Kernville. Conemaugh Health System’s Greater Johnstown Technology Park and ITSI-Bioscience, two major locally based establishments, are already planning and constructing sites in Kernville. The Kernville Arts District and the Kernville Artist Relocation Program is one piece of the plan to revitalize this neighborhood.
Figure 3.3 Maps showing median household income and median value of owner-occupied structures in Johnstown. Maps created by author.

Figure 3.4 Maps showing the percentage of renter-occupied units and percentage of vacant units in Johnstown. Maps created by author.
The Formation Process

The beginning of the Kernville Artist Relocation Program can be traced to the designation of the neighborhood as a “Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area” in 2004, a federal label that spurred a detailed renewal plan for Kernville and the CBD (Faher and Piatek 2005). The goals for the strategy designation are blight elimination, redevelopment of property, and promoting the inception of private enterprise. While this designation was being put into place, a member of one of the local architectural firms inquired to Jim White, Economic Development Coordinator for the City of Johnstown, about Paducah’s Artist Relocation Program.

It caught my interest, and I presented this idea to the city manager. I told him that when you’re pitching something related to art, you want to tie economic development to it. Art should be a part of your economic development. So we pitched it to the city manager, and he bought into it. (White 2007)

Jim White paid a visit to Paducah, where he met with Mark Barone and the president of Paducah Bank. After examining the stipulations of Paducah’s Artist Relocation Program and doing research on his own, he was convinced that this approach, if modified, could be tailored to fit the Kernville neighborhood.

As mentioned earlier, the City of Paducah and Paducah Bank bought properties and then turned around and sold them back to the artists at reduced prices. “We sited some properties that we felt could be renovated, and put those on the website (no properties actually show up on the website). We did not own those” (White 2007). This means that if an artist interested in participating in the program wanted to purchase one of
these homes, they are purchasing it from the previous owner. This was different from
Lowertown, where the city and Paducah Bank acquired properties.

But like Paducah, The Kernville program has a number of organizations working
with them on different pieces of the program, like financing and website creation.
Ameriserv financial is the major contributor, which handles most of the financial
incentives. Concurrent Technologies Corporation (CTC) developed the current website
of the Kernville Artist Relocation Program (http://www.johnstownartspa.com). The
program also has partnerships with other cultural organizations, including the BOTTLE
WORKS Ethnic Center (in Cambria City) and the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art,
which has several locations in the Johnstown region.

Incentives of the Johnstown Artists Relocation Program

Financial Incentives

As with Paducah, The Johnstown Artist Relocation Program and Ameriserv
Financial has set up a number of incentives in hopes of attracting artists to Kernville,
which are listed on the main website (http://www.johnstownartspa.com). The incentives
from Ameriserv Financial resemble those from Paducah Bank with minor differences.
One of these differences concerns the architectural drawings. There is a six month
drawing period where the drawing fees are waived. Ameriserv Financial covers this
incentive; an incentive that is given in the form of a city grant in Lowertown. Both
programs have the same loan financing period, 30 years. The Community Foundation for
the Alleghenies offers $2,500 for additional architectural assistance, not including the
drawings. The City of Johnstown and The Progress Fund offers low interest loans for
arts-related equipment and machinery. The city also offers a $10,000 grant for the first four artists who purchase property in Kernville for each calendar year.

*Other Incentives*

Not much has been written about any other incentives, including tax incentives and advertising that the Kernville Artist Relocation Program offers. Brochures have been made and distributed to some of the other local cultural attractions including the BOTTLE WORKS Ethnic Center. There has been no word of radio or television spots, and only three articles appear in the major local newspaper, “The Tribune Democrat.”

*Cultural Assets in the Johnstown Region*

What the Kernville Artist Relocation Program lacks in advertising, it makes up for in its inventory of cultural assets. On the website, there are a number of cultural attractions listed showcasing the region’s variety and assuring artists that Johnstown is devoted to culture and the arts. The BOTTLE WORKS Ethnic Center is an old industrial building, which was converted to hold several exhibition spaces and events. The Johnstown Heritage Association (JAHA) has cultural facilities around the city including the Johnstown Flood Museum and the Heritage Discovery Center, which is dedicated to telling the story of immigration in the City of Johnstown. The Pasquerilla Performing Arts Center is located on the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown Campus (Richland Township). It holds a 900-seat capacity theatre, which gives performing artists the opportunity to create and perform (http://www.johnstownartspa.com). These and other cultural facilities are mapped in figure 4.20.
Analysis of the Formation of Both Arts Districts

Analysis of the Allocation of Loans and The Selection of Artists

The selection process for artists enrolled in both programs focuses more on the financial status of the artists rather than whether their art is “good” or “bad.” Both programs do have a stipulation; all applicants must be “serious” or dedicated to making and selling art full-time. Jim White says that art “cannot be a hobby. It has to be something that they are fully involved with” (White 2007), and the same goes with the process in Lowertown. Tom Barnett says that they considered a jury early on, but did not feel that they were comfortable making decisions based on content. The main basis of selecting artists for the program is largely based on credit and finances, where “all potential applicants are screened and must have good credit and a steady income to qualify” (Hambrick 2003). There are grants that are given by various organizations, but the primary lenders in each case are the banks, and the banks in each case do not give substantial grants to rehabilitate the homes.

But as noted earlier, Paducah Bank offers loans that are above the actual appraisal value for the property. This is a big risk, where to get back the value of the loan, the property value must rise substantially for the bank to make a profit whenever the property is sold or the loan is paid off, which is why the loan period is 30 years. Early in the process, loans were being given out at up to 400 percent of the appraised value (Patton 2006). It is also important that the artists joining the program have a steady income to pay off the loan in time. Jay Downs Siska, an artist and author living in Lowertown, say that the loans offered at Paducah Bank were guaranteed loans to qualified artists. Siska says that other banks would not guarantee these loans because of the risk involved. But
Paducah Bank did, and this guarantee would be a great incentive for prospecting artists. In 2003, Mark Palmer’s gallery was appraised at $150,000 after he has spent $220,000 in renovations. Because Lowertown was still an undesirable neighborhood at the time, it was important to offer the loans at percentages well over the appraised value to attract more artists (Patton 2006). As more artists have come in and more renovations are being done, property values are rising, and the neighborhood has become more desirable.

To reiterate, artists that qualify for the program must have good credit and a steady income because the loan amounts were often higher than the appraisal value of the property. This was a huge risk for both the artist and Paducah Bank because if the property values did not rise because of renovations, both the artist and the bank would lose out. This risk was dependent on how many artists would come in the neighborhood. The more artists involved in the formation process, the more property values would increase. Screening prospective artists, the developers have given Lowertown a diverse group of artists with a diverse group of backgrounds that would help support themselves and contribute to the formation of Lowertown.

Comparison of Formation Processes Between These Two Sites and the SoHo Model

The formation of the Lowertown and the Kernville Arts District occurred under a different set of circumstances than the formation of the greatly studied SoHo (South Houston) Arts District in New York City. The formation of the SoHo Arts District, according to Zukin, was a market driven process. Supply for the “loft terrain” was a product of the decline of small businesses who first occupied these lofts and the expansion and relocation of the industrial firms that were able to survive this decline
(Zukin 1982). The demand was created when the availability of these lofts (that is the number of available lofts) increased, and the artists, who were primarily the ones interested in these lofts, were increasingly renting. Also, landlords began buying these dilapidated properties and “advertising” to interested artists (Zukin 1982). Market forces also caused a migration of artists, those that were priced out in SoHo and other arts district in New York City, into the New Jersey Suburbs, where the formation of artist clusters began inhabiting old industrial structures (Cole 1987).

This overview of the loft market in SoHo suggests one simple difference between SoHo and Lowertown. SoHo’s market-oriented formation can be looked at as “organic,” or simply unplanned. In Lowertown and Kernville, it is the planning process that attracts artists in these non-industrial neighborhoods and the renovation of the old structures. That is not to say that Zukin’s idea of supply and demand does not play a role in Lowertown and Kernville, but the demand of housing stock is created during the planning process by the city, and not the landlords, through property acquisition. And there is a major difference in housing structures, or the pre-existing landscape, and their uses between SoHo and the other two locations. Since SoHo was an old manufacturing zone, the housing stock created from the decline of industry consisted of industrial structures that were converted into residential uses. Since Lowertown and Kernville were predominately residential neighborhoods, the housing stock has changed very little in terms of usage. In each case, a period of neglect caused the decay of these structures, and in many cases demolition.

Zoning played a key role in the formation of SoHo, Lowertown, and Kernville, where spaces are zoned so that artists can live, work, and sell art. I will talk more of the
role of zoning as a factor of physical transformation in the next chapter. But it is important to note that in SoHo, zoning was changed to protect artists from taking illegal residence in structures that were not up to building and fire codes (Simpson 1981). This zoning change in 1971 transformed SoHo from a manufacturing neighborhood to a predominately residential neighborhood (Simpson 1981). In Lowertown, the zoning was pre-existing, and in Kernville the zoning was changed in 2005 to accommodate more commercial use, but allowed the same living and working stipulation as with both SoHo and Lowertown. In SoHo, zoning changes were brought about by the political activism of artists’ organizations to prevent the demolition of lofts for high rise office buildings and freeways (Simpson 1981). In Lowertown and Kernville, zoning is used as an incentive for relocation, therefore critical in the formation of Lowertown and Kernville Arts Districts.

The Kernville Formation

The success of the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program has inspired city officials in Johnstown to use this model as a means for revitalizing the Kernville neighborhood and spurring economic growth. The Kernville Artist Relocation Program already has an incentives package in place for interested artists, and in November of 2006, the first artist has taken residence. Of course, time is a major factor in measuring the progress of the Kernville Artist Relocation against the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program, but there are questions of this author regarding whether Kernville will meet the same success as Lowertown.
One question concerns the aggressiveness of city planners to get the word out about this program. Articles in newspapers and journals have pressed the Lowertown program even before its inception in 2000. Scanning the local newspapers, the Kernville Artists Relocation Program has seen little press (I counted three articles since 2003, each talking more about the impact of the Conemaugh Tech-Park than the arts district). In talking with Jim White, he seemed more concerned about the economic development side rather than revitalization and cultural development planning strategy. The inception of the Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) funding can be interpreted as a means of demolishing old structures for commercial uses rather than renovation for residential use. The Conemaugh Tech-Park and ITSI-bioscience will open soon, providing a significant amount of jobs to the city, which will have more of an initial economic impact than an Artist Relocation Program with just one artist so far. Jim White made it a point to include the Artist Relocation Program as part of Johnstown’s Economic Development Planning, where in Lowertown, the economic development seemed to create itself through artists investing capital into building materials and contractors. Since the beginning of the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program, millions of dollars have been inserted into the local economy, something that was not expected. Because the Lowertown program was able to put millions of dollars into the local economy, the planners in Johnstown are putting their faith into an idea that is not a guarantee, but the economic effects are yet to be seen.

I am not spelling “DOOM” for the Kernville Artist Relocation Program; it is still too early and the potential is there. But I am questioning the priorities of city officials as to where their efforts are being concentrated. The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program,
in its early stages, seemed to be getting top priority over other projects in the city, and it has been attacked by its critics because of the aggressive code enforcement and property acquisition. Also, there is no one on the city staff specifically assigned to oversee the program, unlike Lowertown (White 2007). Mark Barone was hired by the City of Paducah specifically to devise a plan for Lowertown, and his work is testament to Lowertown’s success, and it seems in the Johnstown case that no one is putting the time into the project as Mark Barone did in Paducah.
CHAPTER 4: THE MORPHOLOGY OF LOWERTOWN AND KERNVILLE

Introduction to the Chapter

Old neighborhoods that have been converted into arts districts go through significant transformations. Morphology, in Frost-Kumpf’s study, is defined as the district’s “form, plan, and functional areas,” and “includes different kinds of cultural and non-cultural facilities and activities, and a unified ‘look’ through signage and promotional materials” (Frost-Kumpf 2001: 24). This chapter will document these changes that have occurred in these neighborhoods.
The first section of this chapter focuses on the morphology of mainly the Lowertown Arts District, and in the Kernville Arts District. I examine how historic preservation and zoning contribute to the revitalization of the built environment, including homes, signage, and lighting. I analyze the locations of performance spaces in conjunction with neighborhood locations, and look at the activity spaces (festivals, galleries, shops, etc.) that facilitate these artists, particularly the gallery that Mark Palmer revitalized, from a structure that was nearly torn down to an art gallery, studio, and living space.

The Morphology of Lowertown

The Role of Zoning and Historical Preservation in Lowertown

The zoning in Lowertown started with a pre-existing zone that was in place before the start of the Artist Relocation Program, meaning no new zoning designations were needed to accommodate the artist’s use of structures, but stronger code enforcement has been implemented including HARC guidelines. The official designation of the zone is an H-2 (Historical Neighborhood Zone), and the purpose of this designation according to the City of Paducah Zoning Ordinance is “to encourage the development, redevelopment, and preservation of the city’s historic neighborhood areas,” which includes all of Lowertown. This zoning accommodates low, medium, and high density residential uses as well as commercial uses, which is key in allowing artists to live, work, and sell in one space.

But what is more important to the physical morphology of structures in Lowertown is the historic designation in the zoning put in place in the 1980s. Any
renovations done to the exterior of these structures must not impair the historical integrity of the structure. The ordinance defines “historical integrity” as:

…Those proposed portions of the affected real estate which are ordinarily visible from any public roadway within the zone are characteristic in appearance to architectural styles, materials and color show by the evidence to have been prevalent in Paducah prior to 1940 or at the date of original construction of the structure, whichever date is earlier. (City of Paducah, Code of Ordinances).

Any renovations are overseen by the Paducah’s Historical Architectural Review Commission (HARC) and must be approved before any additions or subtractions are done to structures. HARC is a very powerful administrative body that surveys any historical buildings, makes recommendations for the designation of historical districts in the City of Paducah, and prepares the plans for their preservation (City of Paducah, Code of Ordinances). Though HARC regulates changes made to the exterior of structures, they do not regulate changes made to the interior of these structures. This gives the artists the creative freedom to renovate the interiors of their galleries and studios to their needs.

Structural and Infrastructure Morphologies

Zoning and Historic Preservation are the guidelines to the transformation of the built environment in Lowertown. Along with the changes made to homes, other changes have been made to make these neighborhoods distinct from others. Many arts districts attempt, and succeed in most cases, to create uniform signage and landscape design (Frost-Kumpf 2001). Additional amenities, including street lighting and extra police surveillance, provide extra safety for residents.
Housing Stock

The combination of zoning and historic preservation with artist incentives provided by Paducah Bank has been crucial in the restoration of many houses in Lowertown by resident artists. See figures 4.2 through 4.8.

Figure 4.2 Deterioration of structures in Lowertown were commonplace. This structure would transform into the “O Gallery”. Photo provided by Char Downs.
Figure 4.3 The “O” Gallery during renovations. Photo provided by Char Downs.

Figure 4.4 The “O Gallery” during renovations (top) and after (bottom). Photo provided by Char Downs.
Figure 4.5 Lowertown's Cowhouse during the 1937 flood. Photo provided by Char Downs.

Figure 4.6 Lowertown’s Cowhouse was purchased by an artist and renovated. Photo taken by author.
Figure 4.7 Photo provided by Char Downs.

Figure 4.8 Historic preservation ensures that historic integrity is preserved after renovations. Photo provided by Char Downs.
In 2003, Lowertown added 140 street lights spread throughout the neighborhood. The funds for the lights and other infrastructural improvements were provided by a matching grant funded by the federal government ($575,000), the state of Kentucky ($287,000), the city of Paducah, ($200,000), and the Paducah Area Transit Service ($87,500) (Bradley 2003b, Bradley and Street 2003). The addition of these lights was done to provide safety and visibility in the neighborhood and to “add character to an already established neighborhood” (Bradley 2003b). See figure 4.9. Adding additional safety to the neighborhood, all intersections in Lowertown are four-way stop intersections to reduce speed (Bradley 2003b). There are also two types of sign-markers that have been added to the intersections and the houses. The markers in the intersections are added to some of the new lighting fixtures, and there are markers on houses which belong to artists who are part of the Artist Relocation Program.

Figure 4.9 Lights and signage mark the Lowertown landscape. Photo taken by author.
Gallery and Activity Spaces

Art spaces can either be categorized as spaces of production or spaces of consumption, as explained in Chapter 2. Simply, spaces of production are where art is made, and spaces of consumption are spaces where art is either sold or taught. The homes purchased and renovated by artists serve as both production and consumption spaces. Some of these homes include personal studios where art is created, and some of these homes serve as galleries where art is sold.

In addition to the galleries and artists studios, there are other cultural facilities that are present in an arts district, which include museums, schools, theaters, and other performance spaces (Frost-Kumpf 2001). See figure 4.10 for a map of these cultural facilities in Paducah. There are several of these cultural facilities, including Four River’s Performing Arts Center (The Carson Center), within walking distance of Lowertown, but only the National Quilt Museum is within Lowertown’s boundaries. Artists and planners do hope to bring an art school into Lowertown, and there are several old structures that serve as candidates.
Figure 4.10 Map of cultural facilities and festival spaces in Paducah. Map created by author.
Many arts districts have special events, which are held monthly or annually. Common to many arts districts is a gallery walk, where all the galleries in the district are open to the public, and are usually held one weekend out of the month. Lowertown has the “Second Saturdays” (held on the second Saturday of every month) where all of the galleries are open from 1pm to 9pm. The main event in Lowertown in the Annual Lowertown Art and Music Festival, which is held toward the end of May and features musicians from around the nation. It is an outdoor festival that had 13,000 visitors last year, according to the website. Four square blocks of Lowertown are set aside to facilitate this festival.

**Mark Palmer’s Residence**

Mark Palmer’s home (524 Harrison) was built in the mid-1860s and is one of the oldest multi-family dwellings in Paducah (Siska 2005, Palmer 2006). See figures 4.11 and 4.12. During the years of decline in Lowertown, this structure was abandoned by its previous tenants and was ready for demolition. When Mark Palmer visited Lowertown, Mark Barone showed him the space, and Palmer was immediately drawn to it.

I saw this place on the website before I got here, and there was just something…it was an instantaneous pull (Showing me the old pictures of the building). There was something about this place even in this condition…I thought it could really be something (Palmer, 2006).
Figure 4.11 Mark Palmer purchased this multi-dwelling duplex, the oldest in Lowertown, for $1. Photo provided by Char Downs.

Figure 4.12 The exterior of Mark Palmer’s gallery after renovations. Photos provided by Char Downs.
Because renovated structures are regulated by HARC, little has been done to deter from the historical integrity of the structure. “There were a couple of doors and railings upstairs that I had to maintain to code… the interior doesn’t have to be under the same codes” (Palmer 2006). See figures 4.13 through 4.15. But being that HARC does not regulate renovations done inside these structures, Mark was able to design the interior to his need. His gallery includes 1,500 square feet of exhibition space and a quilted 26 gauge steel floor installed by Chet Holcomb, a Washington D.C. artist (http://www.markpalmergallery.com). His gallery space also serves as a space for parties, receptions, and other special occasions, and anyone can rent the space for these occasions. Mark’s personal studio is next to his gallery on the bottom floor.

The upper floor of Mark’s home serves as a living space for himself, and extra space is set aside for his artist retreat, where artists can rent the space by the day, the week, or the month. Included in the retreat is a private guest room with a queen size bed, an art studio with a utility sink, shower and bath, outdoor patio, and kitchen amenities including a small refrigerator and microwave.
Figure 4.13 The lower floor serves as Mark’s gallery space. Photo taken by author.

Figure 4.14 The top floor serves as his living space and has additional room for his artist’s retreat. Photo taken by author.
Mark’s space is an example of how zoning and historic preservation have sculpted the built environment to accommodate artist’s needs. And with the influx of artists settling in Lowertown, the neighborhood has been introduced to different uses of structures that were not present before the Artist Relocation Program. Streets that were once empty now show vibrancy as festivals and gallery walks are now a part of the Lowertown landscape. And even at the time of this writing, more structures are either being renovated or new structures are being built.

**The Morphology of Kernville**

**The Role of Zoning and Historic Preservation in Kernville**

Unlike the pre-existing zoning in Lowertown, Kernville has had a zoning change, on April 13, 2005, to accommodate the new commercial firms and the arts district. Where Lowertown has a single zoning designation for the entire neighborhood, Kernville
has several different designations within the neighborhood permitting different uses. See figure 4.16. Among the residential zones are single-family and multi-family zones. Kernville also has two “business” zones which are more likely to accommodate commercial establishments. The new zone added in 2005 is the C-3 (Central Business District), where residential uses are limited and industrial and manufacturing uses are prohibited (City of Johnstown Code of Ordinances). It is this zone where the Conemaugh Tech Park is currently under construction, and this zone is the closest to Johnstown’s Central Business District.

In addition to these different zones, the new zoning change includes an Artist Overlay District, which allows artists to work, create, and live in one dwelling. Along with conforming to established codes, the overlay district has specific stipulations regulating the use of power tools, kiln space, and ventilation (City of Johnstown, Code of Ordinances). What is not present in this zoning is a historical preservation body that regulates changes done to the exterior of the homes. This allows artists to make renovations without the restrictions of maintaining the historical integrity of the structures.
Figure 4.16 This Zoning map of Kernville shows the Artist Overlay District. (City of Johnstown, Code of Ordinances).
The Built Environment

On the Kernville Arts District Website (http://www.johnstownartspa.com), an artist’s rendition of what the district can be is displayed, but because it is still in the process of gathering artists, much of what is in the picture is not a reality yet (see figure 4.19). What has been consistent in the transformation of the built environment is the number of commercial buildings being constructed and the number of demolitions of old houses. Driving through Kernville recently, I did notice a high number of empty lots in the residential section, and construction in the commercial zones is very noticeable. See figure 4.18. The Greater Johnstown Water Authority has constructed a new building in 2005 on a site where twelve blighted parcels stood, and The Gella Professional Building, which opened in April of 2006, stands where six blighted parcels once stood (Johnstown Redevelopment Authority: http://www.johnstown-redevelopment.org/kernvillrp.htm).
Traveling through Kernville right now, you would hardly notice that there is an arts district there at all. But there are two promising signs that this district may be something that resembles what is in the picture in figure 4.19. Beside the one artist who recently joined the program, I noticed that there were new trees planted along Franklin Street on my last drive through the neighborhood; trees that were not there on my previous visit.

Kernville’s Location In Relation to Cultural Activity Spaces

Kernville’s location in relation to many cultural facilities is much different from that of Lowertown. Of the cultural facilities that are within legitimate “walking” distance are the BOTTLE WORKS, The Flood Museum, and the Heritage Discovery Center.
Some area performance spaces, including the Pasquerilla Performing Arts Center and the Mountain Playhouse of Jennerstown, are miles away from the city. The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art (SAMA) has three museums located outside of Johnstown. The Loretto Branch of SAMA is located on the St. Francis University campus in Loretto, Pa. (27 miles), the Ligonier branch is 22 miles away, and the Altoona branch is 42 miles from Kernville. Currently, there are no museums, galleries, or performance spaces in the neighborhood.

![Figure 4.19 This is an artist's rendition of the future in Kernville (http://johnstownartspa.com).](image)

There are a number of cultural festivals that occur throughout the year in the region. “Art in Bloom” and “Potato Fest” are two annual events held in Ebensburg, Pa., 20 miles from Johnstown, and the Artist’s Hall of Fame Ceremony is held at the Sunnehanna Country Club in Westmont Borough. Probably the largest cultural festival in the region is the “Johnstown Folkfest,” held every year on Labor Day weekend. This festival was located in the Cambria City neighborhood of Johnstown, where performers and vendors were scattered throughout the streets. The festival has since moved to an old industrial site (known as Festival Park as of 2004) adjacent to Johnstown’s CBD; a
location that is actually closer to Kernville than the former location. Currently, there are no cultural activity spaces in Kernville and none have been planned. See figure 4.20 for additional cultural facilities in the Johnstown region.

Figure 4.20 Map of cultural facilities and festival spaces in Johnstown and the region. Map created by author.
CHAPTER 5: GENTRIFICATION AND THE LOWERTOWN ARTS DISTRICT

Introduction to the Chapter

As documented in the last chapter, arts districts go through changes in both function and form, and these changes are due to the code regulations set in the planning process. These changes were put in place to accommodate the new artist population. But another transformation takes place, as the composition of the population changes. Because artists from other parts of the nation have settled in Lowertown, there has been a demographic transformation from the population that was in place before the Artist Relocation Program.

This chapter focuses on the gentrification that has taken place in Lowertown. The uses for housing have changed from renter-occupied to more owner-occupied since the start of the program. I discuss some of the general characteristics of gentrifiers and some of the outcomes brought about by a gentrified neighborhood, then applying them to the Lowertown case. This section will include GIS analysis that displays the sales activities since the inception of the program and any changes in the sale prices on a year-by-year basis. This GIS data is combined with observational research and interviews to confirm my findings. Criticism and conflict is brought about by the gentrification process, and I discuss some of the criticisms and conflicts that have occurred in Lowertown since the start of the program. I also talk about how Lowertown has a plan to prevent a re-gentrification that has victimized artists in SoHo and other arts districts in larger cities.
Characteristics of Arts Driven Gentrification

Characteristics of Gentrifiers

Gentrification is often a very complicated process with a number of different factors and outcomes in each case, but with each case, general characteristics of the gentrifiers are consistent. In most of the gentrification studies, gentrifiers are middle to upper-middle class in terms of annual household income (Gale 1984). Gentrifiers tend to be single males or females or couples without children, and the presence of homosexual singles or couples are not an uncommon characteristic (Gale 1984). Occupations of gentrifiers are common in professional, technical, and managerial categories, but Gale also includes artisans as a common occupation. Educational attainment is another common characteristic, where nearly all gentrifiers have some college education and approximately two-thirds have earned a bachelor’s degree (Gale 1984).

Many authors see artists as special members of a middle-class society, including Simpson (1981), Zukin (1982), and Ley (2002). But the first artists that ventured into SoHo were predominately fresh out of college with little capital. They came to the dilapidated lofts because they were affordable. But Ley contests that these artists possess high levels of cultural capital; that is the experience, education, and skills needed to create an advantage to a higher level of status in society (Bourdieu 1986, Ley 2002). Ley states cultural capital is what promotes artists as members of the middle-class, but artist membership as middle-class citizens moves from cultural capital to “actual” capital when discussing the arts-driven gentrification in SoHo. Those artists who were commercially successful were able to survive the second wave of gentrification, where upper class non-artists moved into the neighborhood after rent values increased. But in SoHo, only 1 out
of 100 (and at best, 1 out of 20) artists would achieve this commercial success (Simpson 1981). So artist gentrifiers are selective members of middle-class society because of their possession of cultural capital, even if their possession of economic capital is lacking.

Factors Contributing to Gentrification

What is consistent with many studies of gentrification, a decaying neighborhood is always the starting point of the process. It is in this landscape where rent prices and property values are relatively low, but the potential for increases are high (Gale 1984). As discussed in Chapter 3, a steady demand for low price loft rentals created a market for artists in SoHo (Zukin 1982). Many gentrified neighborhoods are located within two miles of a city’s central business district and close to a gentrifiers place of employment, creating a locational advantage over suburban neighborhoods (Gale 1984). Architectural and historical appeal are other attributes of gentrified neighborhoods, where many of the structures were built before the 1900s, and the influences of historical preservation movements has helped spread the appeal of older homes and neighborhoods (Gale 1984).

The role of city planning has become an important factor in the gentrification process. Many of the conditions stated above are spurned by “organic” forces, for example market trends as discussed in Chapter 3. The needs to remove crime, preserve the built environment, and advance economic development have all been discussed in this thesis.

The Artists in Lowertown

The artists of Lowertown come from many different backgrounds and experiences. Many of these artists created art as a part-time hobby but wanted to locate
to a place to become full-time artists. There are artists that were art educators at colleges and universities who wanted to create art rather than teach. Michael Crouse taught at the college level for 27 years before moving to Lowertown to pursue his craft, multimedia printmaking, full-time. The focus of his printmaking is a visual recorded history of the transformation of rural environments into urban and suburban sprawl, where he has witnessed the loss of cotton fields to the growth of new subdivisions in Madison County, Alabama (http://www.paducaharts.com). Charles Doherty is a performance artist (singer/songwriter) from Nashville, Tennessee who is also an accomplished woodworker. Deb Lyons was an Associate Professor at the National-Louis University, teaching art in the College of Education’s Laboratory School for 21 years before recently moving to Lowertown (http://www.paducaharts.com). Deb and her husband have converted the Clark Apartments into the Colori Divini Gallery and Studio.

And there are still a number of full-time artists that exhibited their art all over the country who have chosen to move to Lowertown. The Erwins, Charlotte and Ira, were professional artists before being the first to join the Artist Relocation Program. Ira specializes in bookbinding, where he found work creating period binding for the film industry, and Charlotte is a mixed media artist winning several national awards for her work (http://www.paducaharts.com). Before relocating to Lowertown, Paul Lorenz lived and worked in Chicago and Berkeley, California. His paintings have been exhibited in Chicago, San Francisco, and Europe, and Paul was a representative for the United States at the Third International Biennial of Contemporary Art in Florence, Italy in 2001, where he won a fifth place award for painting (http://www.paducaharts.com).
On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are artists with non-arts related backgrounds, who have created part-time and have joined the program to create full-time. Mark Palmer, who I have cited throughout this thesis, spent 15 years in the hotel industry and received his undergraduate degree in this field. A couple of factors brought him to Lowertown. The obvious factor was wanting to pursue his art full-time, but he felt it more economical to do it in a smaller town rather than Washington, D.C., where he relocated from in 2002. Also, the neighborhood where he was renting a space at the time was experiencing gentrification. Mark says that rental prices in that neighborhood are very high now, and he felt that he may have been priced out of the neighborhood if he stayed. William Renzulli was a doctor in Elkton, Maryland before moving to Lowertown in 2002 and retired early to “devote all of his time and energy to his art” (White 2003, http://www.paducaharts.com). In Lowertown, Renzulli has opened his own gallery and created his own studio space, where he works with pastels, watercolors, and clay.

An expanded list of artists living in Lowertown can be accessed on Paducah’s Artist Relocation Program Website (http://www.paducaharts.com). What is common for the majority of these artists is that they are relocating from many different locations around the United States. See figure 5.1. In most gentrification studies, residents moving into a gentrifying neighborhood have moved from a location within the same city (Gale 1984). Studies in SoHo also point to a local or metropolitan migration of artist gentrifiers (See Zukin 1982, Cole 1987). That is not the case in Lowertown, where many of these
artists are relocating from other urbanized areas, including Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. looking for a “change of pace.” It is possible that Lowertown gentrifiers do not show the expected patterns of past studies because Paducah is not a large enough area to support these local migrations (it’s hard to find 1,000 artists in a city of just over 26,000).

Another commonality with many, if not all, of the artists who came to Lowertown is their level of education and/or work experience. Many of the artists have graduated from college or an accredited art school, and some have done doctoral work. Those
without these education credentials have had experience in working with art for a long
period of time and have had commercial success, having their work exhibited across the
world and winning nationally accredited awards. Applying Bourdieu’s conception of
cultural capital and middle-class citizenship, the artists of Lowertown are rich in cultural
capital, but their education and work experience allowed most of them to accumulate
what Bourdieu calls “economic capital.” This economic capital is crucial in receiving
loans from Paducah Bank. The artists in Lowertown can be seen as middle-class citizens
more so than the first artists that infiltrated SoHo (Simpson 1981, Zukin 1982) and those
in Toronto and Vancouver (Ley 2002).

**Mapping Gentrification In Lowertown**

Many studies of gentrification have been successful in mapping gentrification
with data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. But since the Artist Relocation Program
started shortly after a “census year,” census data were helpful in confirming observations
of the initial conditions before the program started. These findings are covered in
Chapter 3. The findings for the mapping study are incorporated in the following sections
discussing the extent of gentrification.

**Data Collection and Limitations**

I have obtained data for all of the parcels in Lowertown from the City of Paducah
Planning Department. The variables I examine closely for this study are sale prices of the
parcels, the sale date, vacant parcels (no structures on the parcel), the previous owners
and the current owners. The sale date of the parcels help identify which ones were
purchased after the start of the program. The previous and current owner data (nominal
data) give an idea of who has stayed after the program.

The data provided by the City of Paducah have no social characteristics in the
attribute table, so there is no way to tell what type of persons (other than the 70 artists
who’ve moved in since 2000) are moving in. There is also no census data that would
give a current indication of social characteristics due to fact that the Artist Relocation
Program started after the last census. The only data that gave me an idea of the extent of
the displacement are the “sale dates,” and two columns of nominal data (previous owners
and current owners). Also, there are no updated assessment values attached to these files.
Ben Peterson, a planner for the City of Paducah, says that they get their assessment data
from the McCracken County Property Valuation Administrator and that they are slow to
update their assessments, so they do not have readily available data for GIS.

Methods

Table 5.1 and figures 5.2 and 5.3 display the changes that have occurred in the
Lowertown neighborhood since the Artist Relocation Program started. I have used the
data provided by the Planning Department, which has been updated in 2006. First, I
selected parcels with the sale dates 2000 or later. I needed to assume that these properties
were purchased by artists or by the city for the program, even though some are probably
not. Properties purchased by artists should be relatively low in general (low being less
than $25,000). Even properties purchased by the city should be on the low end of the
spectrum. There are also some vacant parcels that have been counted in the analysis. All
of these data are mapped showing the changes since the program started.
These parcels were also divided by the year they were sold. By averaging the sale prices year-by-year, I have identified if there has been any increase on a year-by-year basis. A map was created by analyzing the previous owners and the current owners. These data are nominal, so I have matched the parcels that have no change in the name, created another attribute column that coded the parcels with no name change, and mapped it. “0s” indicate properties with no change in owner or a slight change in name (either by marriage or properties handed down through the family). “1s” indicate a change in ownership by name, and “2s” indicate no name on the parcel (previous or current owner). A map of the coded data (previous owners and current owners that have not changed) was created (figure 5.3). All maps in this study were created and analyzed using ArcGIS 9.2.

Explanations of Results

*Property Values and Transaction Activity Results*

Table 5.1 and figure 5.2 shows the number of parcels that were sold (or exchanged) after the inception of the Artist Relocation Program year by year. Of the 295 parcels in Lowertown, 153 have been either sold to private owners or purchased by the city. Sixty-eight of the 295 parcels are vacant (nothing built on the parcel) and give an indication of demolitions in the neighborhood. There have been parcels bought by the city specifically for the program, and there are 11 parcels still owned by the city as of 2006.

The number of parcels sold since August 2000 has increased each year, from 3 in 2000 to 45 in 2006 (see table 5.1). Sale prices range anywhere from $1 (Mark Palmer’s
residence) to $2.1 million (Evergreen Services of Paducah). It is important to note that it is not just the homes that are being purchased, but there are other non-residential properties being purchased as well, and many of the higher priced properties are large industrial buildings bought for commercial purposes.

Table 5.1 Property transactions and average sale on a year-by-year basis.
*The Evergreen Services of Paducah was eliminated from the table because of the effect on the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Parcels Sold</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Sale for Year</td>
<td>30133</td>
<td>37444</td>
<td>33131</td>
<td>48347</td>
<td>52781</td>
<td>41917*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, property values have fluctuated year by year between $30,133 in 2000 and $52,781 in 2005. But between the first three years and the three years following, there has been an increase in property sale prices. The average price for a piece of property in Lowertown through all six years was $44,139, and for artists buying a property in less than ideal condition, the sale price was probably less than that.

Population Displacement Results

Of the 227 non-vacant parcels, only 31 parcels have the same owner since the last transaction. The basic coding of nominal data of previous and current owners was the only way of quantifying population displacement, and of course there are holes, but the results are still of some interest as a small number of parcels are still owned by the same owner or family member. See figure 5.3.
Figure 5.2 A three-dimensional map representing the number of property transactions on a year-by-year basis and the sale prices of the properties. Map created by author.
Figure 5.3 A map showing the number of parcels with no change in ownership or no name change in the data. Map created by author.
Discussion of Gentrification In Lowertown

Property Values

In much of the gentrification literature, a rise in property values was an outcome in a gentrifying neighborhood. This rise in property values affected the price of rents that artists had to pay, especially in the New York City arts districts, and it was this rise in rent that forced many artists out of the New York City, so analyzing property values in Lowertown is more important than rental prices. In the 2000 Census, 81 owner-occupied properties in the Lowertown Census Block were valued at under $10,000 or less (50% of all owner-occupied units). Since 2000, 62 properties were purchased under $20,000 and 42 of those properties were purchased for less than 10,000. Between the 2000 Census and averaging the property values of the purchased Lowertown properties, the numbers are nearly the same (around $42,000).

Without an updated database of assessed property values after renovations, it was hard to say how much the property values have actually risen since revitalization. However, my interview with Mark Palmer gives an idea as to what to expect after refurbishing has been done. Mark bought his property for $1, after the city paid $42,000 for structural repairs. After pulling out a loan from Paducah Bank and after renovations, “Now this property, if I put it on the market at the bare minimum, I could sell it at $300,000, and I only owe $197,000 on it. Probably 350 easy right now and maybe more” (Palmer 2006). Charlotte and Ira Erwin’s property was valued at $47,000 when they purchased it, and as of 2003, it was valued at $150,000 after renovations (Hambrick 2003). In visiting Lowertown last November, I have seen many properties fully renovated, some in the process of renovation, and some new structures being built on
once vacant parcels. There are also some structures that need renovations, but most of these are larger buildings that were once used for commercial use. It will be interesting to see how much these property values have risen once the next round of assessment data have been updated.

*Population Displacement*

Again, without any data measuring class or race, it was hard to analyze and map gentrification in Lowertown. With 70 artists enrolled in the program coming from many different parts of the nation and with different backgrounds (and some spending power), it is safe to say that there has been a significant shift in the social class of the population in the Lowertown Arts District since the inception of the Artist Relocation Program. It is also important to remember that Lowertown had over 70 percent rental occupancy, so the shift from a predominately renter-occupied neighborhood to owner-occupied is another indicator of a displaced population.

The city has been a proponent in keeping some of the lower income residents in Lowertown, while the artist boom was occurring. But it is important to understand that before the Artists Relocation Program, the percentage of owner-occupied structures was 30 percent, and of those owner-occupied spaces, “only a fraction” housed low to moderate income families (Barnett 2006). The city spent money to keep those low to moderate income families in the neighborhood, building all new homes for two families and spending grant money for renovations for others (Barnett 2006). The mapping does not show who is being displaced and what their income level was, but the mapping does show a relationship between the number of owner-occupied structures and the number of sales transactions in the past couple of years.
Criticism, Conflict, and Gentrification in Lowertown

Gentrification has both its supporters and its critics, and The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program has had its fare share of both. This section discusses some of the specific conflicts that have occurred in Lowertown since the Artist Relocation Program started. Most of these disputes have concerned the acquisition of properties bought by the city and the zoning controls. This section also discusses the supporter’s claims to this arts-driven gentrification.

Many of these critics have targeted the City of Paducah for the way they have obtained properties for the program by alleging that they are forcing residents out of Lowertown to make room for artists (Bradley 2003d). Bradley points out that many of the critics that have sold their properties in Lowertown sold them for more money than when they bought the properties. Patsy and Lewis Chumbler were two of these critics who owned two lots in Lowertown that were in need of repair. The property they were living in was cited for several code violations, which included rotting wood on the porch, missing bricks from the chimney, and deteriorated window sills (Bradley 2003d). According to the Chumblers, Mark Barone told them to sell him the property for $3,000 or the city will have that property condemned (Bradley 2003d). Barone did admit to offering $3,000 for the property, but denies he said anything about condemnation (Bradley 2003d). The Chumblers eventually sold their property to Paul Lorenz and Louis Lovera in October of 2003 for $7,000. Wayne Chumbler, son of Patsy and Lewis, also owned two properties in Lowertown which he sold to two artists for $37,000 more than what he paid for the properties in 1990, $8,000 (Bradley 2003d). Wayne Chumbler
claims that the profit he made from the two properties was not justified for the work he put into them. Wayne received one notice of code violations in 2002 for not having a landing under his porch, a porch support that was rotting at the base, and peeling paint (Bradley 2003d).

Since the start of the Artist Relocation Program, the city has been more aggressive in enforcing codes to preserve the historical integrity of the structures. On many occasions when the city bought properties, they purchased them at a net loss, and that is what happened in both Chumbler cases. The city bought these houses because they were in bad shape and people who were living there, renting or owning, did not take proper care of their homes. The city does not force residents to leave the neighborhood, but they do force the issue of maintaining their homes up to codes; that helps in the revitalization of the neighborhood.

One of the more unfortunate situations that happened in Lowertown was brought about by Donnie Ingram, a former resident who moved to Florida for a period of time then came back to Lowertown. While in Florida, Ingram established several successful drug rehabilitation centers, for both men and women. When Ingram came back to Lowertown, he wanted to obtain a structure to set up a couple of these homes in the neighborhood. Tom Barnett thought that no one would want to reinvest in the homes if there was a drug rehab center in close proximity to residents, but the city could not deny Ingram’s entrance into the neighborhood. So in 2000, the drug rehabilitation center was established in the Colonial House at 333 N. 7th Street (Bradley 2003c).

Barnett could not prevent Ingram from running his business under Kentucky’s Fair Housing Act and approval from HARC, but problems occurred when the city denied
assistance to Ingram when he applied for federal grants to run his business, which Ingram felt was a violation of the Fair Housing Act (Bradley 2003c). Ingram felt that the inability to apply for federal grants was an attempt to drive his business out of Lowertown. Ingram filed a 3.35 million dollar lawsuit claiming Fair Housing Act violations by the city. Along with the lawsuit, Barnett says that Ingram would add fuel to the critic’s claims by saying slanderous things about the city to people in Paducah. Ingram had also called for the resignations of both Tom Barnett and Mark Barone claiming the two had illegally profited from buying and selling properties for the Artist Relocation Program, but as seen in the Chumblers cases this was not true. Barone and Barnett have both purchased their own properties in Lowertown, and in both cases, they were purchased for more than they were assessed (Bradley 2003d). The Ingram lawsuit would eventually go away, and Barnett says that the legal process was done by the book. There was no legal evidence that supports Ingram’s claims of unfair practices. And despite the negative press that the Artist Relocation Program was receiving, artists were still moving to the neighborhood, and the program did not lose any steam in revitalization.

Another claim that the critics have brought forth is the idea that the artists are getting special treatment from the city. The program is set up where artists are getting added benefits in the form of low interest loans and some grant money (for artist’s incentives, see chapter 3). Charlotte Erwin says, “We haven’t been given anything. We have a mortgage to pay, and we pay it” (Bradley 2003a). But there are more supporters of this program than there are critics living in the neighborhood. Gayle Kaler, the Lowertown Association President, is one of these supporters, and she believes that the
only people who are being criticized are the people that are making strides to revitalize the neighborhood (Bradley 2003d). She adds by saying, “It’s not the artists who are the problem. It’s the people who do not want to adhere to the laws of the city who are the problem” (Bradley 2003d). Residents are also in support of the work that Tom Barnett and Mark Barone have done to bring the artists into Lowertown to revitalize their neighborhood.

Criticisms have also come from former landlords who were forced out by not keeping their structures up to code. Mark Palmer says that there was a landlord who owned thirty percent of the property before the inception of the program. Because of the less stringent code enforcement, these landlords did not have to keep their buildings up to code. These landlords became angry when inspections were more frequent. “Then they realized, as this neighborhood became gentrified, they could sell their properties for more than they ever thought they would. So they quieted down after a couple of years” (Palmer 2006).

**Preventing Another SoHo**

In SoHo and the Lower East Side, another gentrification, or re-gentrification, occurred when upper-class non-artists moved into the lofts that were renovated by the artists who were previously residents. Re-gentrification, or Super-gentrification, is the “the transformation of already gentrified, prosperous and solidly upper-middle-class neighborhoods into much more exclusive and expensive enclaves” (Lees 2003: 2487). As the rent values began to rise because of these renovations, artists who did not have the capital means to pay rents were eventually priced out of the loft market.
There is a very simple concept that may alleviate the re-gentrification that was experienced in SoHo, and that is the idea of ownership. Ownership benefits the artists in two ways. First, since these artists are home owners, they cannot be forced out by rising property values after renovations are made. Second, when the property values do rise and the home owners are ready to sell, the artists will profit from the sale. There is no telling whether an upper-class non-artist population may or may not infiltrate the homes of Lowertown, but if that situation ever occurs, the artists will profit from the sale.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Formation

The formation of the Lowertown Arts District was brought about by the proactive planning of two focused individuals and the opportunity to rehabilitate and preserve a decaying neighborhood. Before the Artist Relocation Program, Lowertown was a neighborhood where landlords owned up to 70 percent of the historic structures. These landlords would split up these structures into apartments, and the lack of code enforcement contributed to the deterioration of these structures. The catalyst, according to some authors, was a drug deal that Mark Barone witnessed.

The Kernville neighborhood of Johnstown experienced similar conditions before the establishment of the Kernville Artist Relocation Program. The Kernville Artist Relocation Program, like Lowertown, was also brought about by the need to revitalize a decaying neighborhood, but with a certain stress on economic development. The difference between these ideas is that in addition to the Arts District, the Kernville Neighborhood has other major projects in the planning stage that may dictate the continuing formation of the program.

Both of these districts were derived ideas from other cities with similar programs. The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program was modeled from a similar program in Rising Sun, Indiana, a small river town just outside of Cincinnati, Ohio. The Kernville Artist Relocation Program was modeled after the program in Paducah, offering much of the same incentives.
Both programs offer both monetary and non-monetary incentives that are exclusive to artists, including lost cost housing, low interest loans, tax incentives and grants. In the Lowertown case, loans were given out, to those who qualified, at times up to 400% of the appraised value of the structure, which was a huge risk to the artist as well as Paducah Bank. These loans were guaranteed, something that other banks would not do because of the risk, so it was important that the artists that were brought in had good credit or other forms of finances; this is not a program for the “starving artist.”

In addition to utilizing incentives to attract artists, their websites advertise the cultural assets (or cultural facilities) to give these cities the image of a legitimate cultural destination. Lowertown has been very successful in the advertising department with radio ads on NPR networks in regional cities, including Chicago, and forms of free advertisement opportunities with television programs featuring Lowertown. Kernville does not have an advertising plan at this point but does have a number of cultural facilities and activities spread about the City of Johnstown and the region.

I have compared the formations of Lowertown and Kernville to that of the SoHo Arts District in New York City. SoHo’s formation was dictated, according to Zukin (1982), by market forces or natural forces. Zoning changes that accommodate artist activities were only made as art became more commercialized, whereas in the cases of Lowertown and Kernville, zoning is advertised as an incentive. Another difference arose in the pre-existing uses of structures, where Lowertown and Kernville were already residential neighborhoods, but in SoHo, industrial uses were transformed to residential uses once the artists arrived.
In examining the Kernville formation, I have my questions and doubts as to whether the Kernville Artist Relocation Program will be as successful as The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program. These include the lack of advertising and publicity, the establishment of other higher profile projects in the neighborhood, the number of demolitions to older houses, the stress on economic development, and the priority of the planners.

**Morphology**

Zoning played a strong role in the morphology of each district, allowing artists to work, sell, and live in one structure. In Lowertown, historic preservation plays a stronger role than in Kernville. Historic preservation dictates how the exterior of homes are to be altered preserving the historic integrity of the neighborhood, so artists have regulations on exterior renovations. But these historical preservation regulations do not apply to the interiors of the homes, allowing artists to design their galleries and homes to their creative desires. In Kernville, zoning changes were implemented recently, and with these changes an artist overlay district was established with specific regulations for artists to follow. There is no historical preservation presence in Kernville to regulate exterior alterations to homes.

In Lowertown, the conversion from rental spaces to owner-occupied spaces and the addition of galleries has changed the function to spaces of production of art and the consumption of art. Mark Palmer’s gallery is an example of how the function of these spaces has changed, and his case was also used to demonstrate exterior alterations consistent with many houses in Lowertown.
Infrastructure modifications have been added to the Lowertown neighborhood, including sidewalk repair, addition of lights, markers, and four-way stop signs. These modifications were done to provide safety to the residents and create a distinct and aesthetically pleasing landscape. No modifications like these are present in Kernville, with the exception of planted trees along Napoleon Street, a sign of hope that the Kernville Arts District may become a reality.

Cultural facilities in relation to the location of Lowertown are within walking distance. Cultural activities in Lowertown include the Lowertown Art and Music Festival and Second Saturdays. The cultural facilities and activities in relation to Kernville’s location are further, in most cases not within walking distance. There are no spaces for cultural activities in Kernville at this time, for the morphology of Kernville is still commercially driven with the construction of the Conemaugh Tech-Park and other commercial facilities. In Frost-Kumpf’s inventory study (2001), many of the arts districts she has studied have these facilities and activity spaces relatively close, most within the boundaries, to these districts.

**Gentrification in Lowertown**

In chapter 5, I discussed the extent of gentrification that has occurred in Lowertown since the inception of the Artist Relocation Program in August of 2000. I discussed the common factors that have contributed to gentrification and common characteristics of gentrifiers. The artists of SoHo were a unique group of gentrifiers because even though they possessed little economic capital, they possessed great amounts of “cultural capital,” an idea conceptualized by Bourdieu. Their possession of cultural
capital has placed artisans into the middle-class social group, according to Bourdieu and Ley. This cultural capital was instrumental in transforming the SoHo neighborhood from an old dilapidated industrial wasteland into a re-energized, thriving arts district where property values of old industrial lofts have risen to the point where only a few wealthy artists were able to maintain their rental spaces while an upper class non-artist population invaded SoHo during a second wave of gentrification.

A group of artists with both cultural capital and economic capital from all over the country have made their imprint on the revitalization of Lowertown by turning old run-down renter-occupied multi-family dwellings into single family, owner-occupied, restored spaces. With this transformation, much of the former residents who lived in these once renter-occupied dwellings have been displaced. The City of Paducah has played an important role in keeping low to moderate income home owners in Lowertown by providing city grants, and in some cases new homes, to preserve a socially diverse neighborhood.

Maps were generated to quantify the number of sales transactions since the start of the Artists Relocation Program and to quantify, to some degree, the extent of population displacement. Among my findings are high rates of sales transactions increasing with each year, a rise (on average) in property values, and a low rate of maintained ownership through the start of the program. Interviews have confirmed rises in property values, in some cases dramatically.

With the gentrification of Lowertown came conflicts and criticism from former residents. Many of these disputes have dealt with the manner in which the city has obtained properties and the aggressiveness in which they enforce zoning codes. One
particular case was taken to federal court claiming that the city was conducting unfair housing practices preventing certain businesses to function in this city. Even though these criticism and conflicts were giving the program a bad name, the artists continued the come, and long tenured residents of the neighborhood continue to show their support for the program.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The 2010 Census will open new avenues in analyzing the changes that have occurred in Lowertown. With this census, the social, economic, and housing characteristics during this decade can be analyzed in a way that resembles many other gentrification studies.

The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program has had a major effect on the local economy of Paducah, where the galleries, museums, and festivals attract scores of tourists yearly bringing in millions of dollars. Artists with capital from loans and other sources invest money into building materials, and those artists who do not do their own renovations hire contractors injecting more capital into the local economy. Additional studies should include an investigation of the economic impact of the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program.

Lowertown is an interesting case where artists from across the nation settled down, where arts spaces have been created from a once forgotten landscape of decay. It would be interesting to see study how these art spaces serve as nodes for the networks of artists in Lowertown. These nodes and networks may reveal answers to how these artists play a role in bringing other artists to Lowertown from other urbanized areas. It would
also be interesting to see how these artists play a role in the political process: Do the artists of Lowertown have political power in Paducah?

With the time lag between the establishments of both the Lowertown and the Kernville Artist Relocation Programs, it was difficult to compare the progress of the two. The Lowertown Artist Relocation Program has recruited over 70 artists in a short amount of time (5 years), and it would be interesting to examine the Kernville Artist Relocation Program 5 years from now to see if it will have the same impact on the Kernville Neighborhood. Comparisons can also be made with other cities of comparative size that have established arts districts, whether they follow the same model as Paducah or not. The success of the Lowertown Artist Relocation Program has created a model of revitalization that deserves attention from the academic community, and this thesis serves as a cornerstone for future studies.
References


Barnett, Tom, Director of Planning for the City of Paducah. 2006. 15 November. Personal Interview (telephone).


———2003d. Resurrection or is it Persecution? The Paducah Sun.


Siska, Jay Downs, artist and author. 2007. 17 March. Personal Interview (telephone).


White, Jim, Economic Development Coordinator for the City of Johnstown. 2007. 9 February. Personal Interview (telephone).
