Downtown Appalachia: Revitalization and Green Governance in Charleston, WV

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ABSTRACT

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No matter the geographic location, cities in America have undergone many physical and socioeconomic changes throughout the post-industrial shift. Cities have coped with the many problems of this post-industrial shift through various forms of urban renewal. While much academic work related to urban renewal has been conducted on the major industrial cities of the U.S. Northeast and Midwest, a gap in the literature is apparent for Appalachian cities. Charleston’s growth regime is working to revitalize the city's downtown via sustainable urban renewal projects. This study focuses on how urban renewal is driven or dictated by eco-friendly guidelines, how Charleston's business community resists yet follows the growth logic of Business Improvement Districts, and how the parties involved define "green" in an Appalachian context. This thesis demonstrates that there is no single definition of sustainable urban renewal in Charleston. Instead sustainable redevelopment predominantly centers around the reuse of old buildings that hearken back to the extractive economies of the city’s industrial past. Charleston’s growth regime is thus tapping into its history to reestablish the city’s image as a prominent urban Appalachian center.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainable urban renewal is increasingly incorporated into the growth strategies of U.S. cities. There is not one set of credentials that define what sustainability means in the context of urban renewal, but rather a myriad of concepts and ideas that when put into practice are supposed to lessen the stresses urbanism places on the environment at a variety of scales. Sustainability in the context of urban renewal can encompass anything from using fewer materials in construction projects to better incorporating aspects of nature into the city like parks, forests, and river-ways.

Accordingly, Chris Hagerman (2007) suggests that in order for cities to become more sustainable places, urban redevelopment projects need to fully incorporate aspects of the local natural world. Hagerman (2007) notes that Portland, Oregon is doing this by revitalizing its urban watersheds to function both as parks and ecological cleansing areas in proximity to the Central Business District. Despite the variety of projects possible, common aspects of urban sustainability include a focus on long-term environmental commitments that are supposed to protect and enhance the environment for generations to come (Martens, 2006). While urban sustainability is certainly about protecting the environment, it should also be about making social and economic systems in the city more cohesive as well (Kieffer, 2003; Reitan 2005). Hagerman (2007) goes on to suggest that Portland’s efforts to revitalize its watersheds as part of its urban renewal projects increases the city’s livability, which in turn adds to attractiveness that makes more people want to visit/live downtown and ultimately improve the local economy.
But why is sustainability increasingly a part of urban renewal strategies in many U.S. cities seemingly so different than Portland? Much literature, both inside and outside of academia, has been written on sustainability movements in the urban context (see Kreuger and Gibbs, 2007). In some cases the efforts a city makes to ‘green’ its renewal projects are driven by the local citizens and other private sector organizations’ concern for the environment. Another major factor that is helping drive this transition is the post-industrial shift that is occurring within many cities in the U.S. These cities use sustainable forms of renewal to help construct, and draw attention to, new images being crafted for the city and its local/regional economy by municipal government and corporations (Short, 1999). A city that is considered ‘green’ has a certain appeal that might contribute to its competitive edge in the globalizing, high-tech sector economy (Jim, 2004). This transition is certainly risky, however, as undertaking sustainable urban renewal projects can take an enormous amount of public and private investments that are not guaranteed to pay off in today’s competitive global economy. This is especially the case in smaller cities that are at a competitive disadvantage relative to their larger counter-parts with more diverse economies. But how do cities carry out sustainability-oriented urban renewal strategies?

Much attention has been paid to how pro-growth urban renewal occurs in general. Work by Molotch (1976; 1993) on the city as a growth machine is a good example. The growth machine thesis, among other things, examines how urban politics in the West are primarily geared toward pro-economic growth strategies. The growth machine thesis has been instrumental in the development of regime theory whereby particular constellations
of political power are understood to institutionalize urban growth policies in local and varied contexts (Lauria 1997; Gibbs and Jonas 2000). Both of these concepts are exemplary in their articulation of the processes by which public and private actors work together in various contexts to promote strategies that expand their local economy. Cox uses the growth machine thesis and urban regime theory to describe what he calls ‘growth regimes’ and how they use ideologies to promote pro-growth logic in highly varied urban contexts (1999). Accordingly, at the local level the growth regime acts as the initial driving force in developing the ideas and plans for urban renewal. The growth regime can be comprised of individuals in the local populous, nonprofit groups, business owners, and municipal departments such as the mayor’s office and planning department, among others. Growth regimes are understood as vital to planning and implementing growth-oriented urban renewal projects as they supposedly distribute urban governance among a greater number of stakeholders than was the case in the era of urban managerialism by the local state alone (Harvey, 1989). Examples of growth regime projects include planning and (re)development of urban spaces and the boosterism associated with subsequently (re)making the image of the competitive city. Proponents of shared governance insist that this entrepreneurial form of urban governance is more democratic, though this claim has come under intense scrutiny as power is often consolidated in regimes whose membership is restricted to political and economic elites (Harvey, 1989).

I use the work of Cox (1999) and regime theorists already cited to understand how various stakeholders in Charleston, WV have come together as a ‘growth regime’ to formulate what they consider to be ‘sustainable’ urban renewal projects in the downtown
area. Charleston is an interesting case study because it appears that its growth regime has encouraged the use of growth strategies similar to business improvement districts (BIDs), even though BIDs are not yet officially deployed in the redevelopment of downtown Charleston. Under the BID model, the owners of participating businesses work together to alter the appearance of their particular shopping district. The use of green technologies and improvements to the local urban environment are frequently a part of their agreement. These cooperative efforts are meant to boost the city’s image via raising the levels of business attractiveness. However, it appears that there is more to ‘sustainable’ urban renewal in Charleston than just emulating a green BID model of redevelopment.

Therefore, I set forth to find out how stakeholders that make up the growth regime in Charleston have initiated sustainable urban renewal in other ways. I also seek to uncover if there are any setbacks because of the city’s historical and present connection to resource industries like coal and natural gas which are known to cause great pollution and considered by many to be less than sustainable. In doing so I discovered how community development organizations such as the Charleston Urban Renewal Authority (CURA) and Charleston Area Alliance (CAA) view sustainable forms of urban renewal. These organizations are in fact changing how eco-friendly practices are being implemented in urban renewal projects and persuading those who hold public office that they make financial sense. My findings indicate that sustainable renewal in Charleston has close connections with its industrial legacy as a center for commerce in the Appalachia extractive economy. This may sound paradoxical, but Charleston’s growth regime is busy promoting the ‘new and sustainable’ image of its past industrial and
resource extractive businesses/economies. The growth regime accomplishes this by supporting projects that are connected to the past but with added aspects of the modern sustainability movement added into the mix.

Charleston was founded as a banking center for the extractive economies which prospered as a result of the area’s location within Appalachia. Downtown Charleston is located at the confluence of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers, but it was the Kanawha River that allowed Charleston to thrive. The first major industry that took advantage of the Kanawha River in Charleston was the salt industry. The first salt furnace opened in 1797 and the Kanawha Valley eventually became one of the world’s top exporters of salt (Stealey, 1993). In fact, many of the streets in downtown Charleston are all named after prominent salt tycoons who contributed greatly to the establishment and growth of the city. In order to run the salt furnaces where the brine would be heated and turned into salt, a fuel source was needed. The forested region of Appalachia was perfect for fueling this process with timber. Once coal was discovered near Charleston, timber gave way to coal as a fuel source for salt. The coal industry became an industry of its own and is still one of the most prominent and profitable industries in West Virginia and throughout Appalachia. The Kanawha Valley is still rich with salt brine, but once the canal systems in Ohio and New York opened up, the price of salt went down and the industrial scene in Charleston was greatly changed (Stealey, 1977).

The next major industry that aided in Charleston’s growth (and now decline) was the chemical industry. Companies such as Dow and Dupont established themselves along the Kanawha and subsequently the Charleston area was able to grow at rates never before
seen. See Figure 1 below. However, just as postindustrial decline is affecting many cities in the United States, the downsizing of chemical production in the Kanawha Valley is causing Charleston to lose a great number of jobs and people.

![Historical population chart of Charleston and Kanawha County](image.png)

Figure 1: Historical population chart of Charleston and Kanawha County. Figure provided by the Kanawha County Court and United States Geological Survey.

According to the U.S. Census, Charleston’s population declined by ten thousand from 2000 to 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010). Industry is not the only sector of business that keeps Charleston thriving though. As my interviewees told me, healthcare and education
in Charleston continue to grow and the city’s growth regime has been promoting Charleston as an attractive destination and place to live through various types of place-promoting boosterism.

Examples of how the city is using its past to promote its sustainable future can be seen in a series of urban renewal projects I will exemplify in this thesis. Haddad Riverfront Park is a downtown waterfront park that connects the industrial history of the Kanawha River with the city’s downtown. In doing so, enhanced urban hydrology is used to create a sense of nostalgia as well as literal and figurative connections to Charleston’s business district. Paying tribute to the city’s past industrial heritage is the newly developed sternwheeler-inspired concert stage that adds to the aesthetics of the park as well as being a focal point of the city when viewed from across the river. The West Virginia Power Park has recently been constructed as a downtown stadium but has used old, yet renovated warehouses in the design. These warehouses show how the city and local energy businesses (as the stadium is called Appalachian Power Park) are willing to see Charleston into the future while still being able to retain the city’s connection with the past. The warehouses make up part of the stadium structure while also serving as the team’s and other businesses’ space. Capitol Market is another example where a group of trendy businesses sell local products and produce out of a renovated train depot. Finally, Slack Plaza, as part of the Kanawha Regional Transit Mall, is going to be redeveloped as a sustainable park with a grant obtained from the US Environmental Protection Agency’s “Greening America’s Capitols Project” (See Figure 2 below for a map of all of these projects in relation to downtown Charleston). These kinds of renewal projects provide
insight into the definitions of sustainable urban renewal in Charleston. In the remainder of this thesis I provide more information on how Charleston is connecting its past to its present in what its growth regime considers sustainable urban renewal projects like these. But before I move on to the literature review, it is necessary to reiterate the research questions that I asked before I undertook this research project. They are:

1. How have local government agencies partnered with the private sector in downtown urban renewal projects in Charleston, West Virginia?

2. How has Charleston incorporated urban sustainability strategies in its renewal process downtown, and is renewal linked to its industrial and Appalachian heritage?
Figure 2: Map of Charleston, WV, with the sustainable urban renewal projects examined in this thesis highlighted to show their geographical position in the downtown area. Highlighted in yellow is Haddad Riverfront Park, in green is Slack Plaza at the KRT mall, in blue is the Capitol Market, and in Maroon is Appalachia Power Park. Map courtesy of Charleston Visitors Bureau, 2011.
Coping with Urban Changes

Cities that show signs of decline can be reinvested through the process of urban renewal (Chan and Lee, 2007; Larsen and Hansen, 2008). Urban renewal projects are strategies to revitalize areas of a city when it becomes degraded over time, whether from the out-migration and abandonment of inner city buildings by residents and businesses to the suburbs for lower rents, or because of capital lost in the post-industrial shift (Chou, 2007). Many cities pursue reinvestment projects that are supposed to enhance social, physical, and environmental infrastructures in order to make them more attractive to the ‘creative class’ (Florida 2002). One way to counteract the potentially detrimental effects of urban disinvestment is to revamp the built environment but also improve local ecosystems and environments (Adams and Hastings, 2001; Perkins, 2010). Cox mentions that when local governments fail to work closely with local chambers of commerce as well as other entities such as urban development authorities, deficient forms of urban renewal can occur, however. These efforts are also costly processes, and the investors who fund these projects are taking chances with their money to make a profit upon project completion (Kaplan et al., 2007). Accordingly, many cities have agencies such as urban renewal authorities who are separate from local government but play a significant part in urban governance. These agencies frequently work closely with non-profits and other non-governmental organizations to shape urban renewal projects (While et. al, 2004).
It is argued that these new, shared forms of urban governance strategies are needed to help cities overcome problems associated with the post-industrial shift. Fiscal crisis, as a result of industrial flight, makes cities more apt to seek out innovation through private institutions outside of the local state apparatus (Gerometta et. al, 2007). Civil sector organizations are frequently included in novel governance models that target urban growth. There is a widespread belief within urban policy circles that when a municipal government holds too much power within a city, there may not be enough parties involved to come up with ample ideas to overcome stagnant systems of management and bring about change (Moltoch, 1999). Frequently the share of power held by the municipal authority is reduced when citizens and private organizations share urban governance (Elwood, 2004). Shared urban governance has dealt especially with a mixing of state and private policy making in downtown areas (McCann 2003).

**Growth Regimes within the Entrepreneurial City**

In many instances, municipalities decide which path of development they will take after analyzing what funds they have available via their tax base on which they are dependent (Boyle, 1999). Competitive urban ideologies call for cooperation between capitalists, residents/workers, as well as government that can result in a successful growth regime (Cox, 1999). Importantly, according to Cox (1999), growth regimes do not always have to be linked to what the general population of a city wants to happen. The attraction of growth regimes is tied to the possibility they can bring back capital to the city which is believed to help everyone’s economic prospects.
Within cities, growth regimes unite land owners and developers in many instances who are already invested in areas of high potential economic return—especially in the Central Business District (CBD). This growth in many cases is supported by a wide range of elected officials and business owners in the community who will benefit from proposed development strategies that are meant to bring capital back to the city (Logan et. al., 1999). Logan, Whaley and Crowder (1999) discussed growth management or director regimes where community groups strongly interact with local development agencies that impose agendas for development. Also discussed in Logan et al. (1999) are exclusionary regimes which tend to be dominated by local property owners/residents to the detriment of potential decision making by the larger urban populace. These scholars concluded that well-engaged citizens might be left out of decision-making processes as growth regimes are often highly exclusionary. Urban growth regimes (re)negotiate and maintain a particular order at all levels relating to local politics and economics (Moltoch, 1999).

Harvey calls this move toward shared urban governance a shift from managerial to entrepreneurial urbanism (1989). He notes that entrepreneurial urban governance has become more focused on local development and economic growth through emphasis on market-based initiatives negotiated between the public and private sector in cities. Community strategies, as part of entrepreneurial urban governance, (CS) are ways for cities to plan for future development, business interaction and governing strategies (Raco, 2006). Raco notes, however, that the diffusion of decision-making power associated with participatory planning does sometimes overtake representative structures of power.
associated with democracy. This can happen when private parties with the drive to take larger initiatives to make changes in their city’s governance work behind closed doors with little public input. Therefore CS efforts sometimes stem from local groups and policy makers and major stakeholders, at the expense of incorporating input from the urban populace as a whole. However, the leeway or pull local or private organizations can have depends on the power configurations of local government (Elwood, 2004). Elwood (2004) goes on to suggest, however, that government allowance for private participation in urban governance is considered a must in most cities.

Corporations play an increasing role in the negotiation of local economic developmental politics and have a close relationship with urban government planning agencies (Cox, 1999). Local governments in turn work closely with local developers and corporations to streamline the local political system toward a platform for economic growth. Apart from the vast amounts of finance capital that create change in many cities, other forms of human capital are greatly needed to make and establish plans for future forms of development, too (Elwood, 2002). Citizen groups also work with corporations and municipal governments to make local change. Local elites, corporations, and government officials frequently work very closely together in public/private partnership to plan for urban renewal in the entrepreneurial city.

Neoliberal urban planning is very much involved in the devolution of power to make policy toward public-private partnerships sometimes beyond the purview of democratic control (Ghose, 2005). Competitiveness becomes the mantra by which urban renewal projects are formulated and justified by public/private partnerships. Ghose
(2005) also states that public/private partnerships that emphasize capital-oriented urban renewal rely on nonprofits and other citizen groups to provide social service provision in the city. There is always the challenge of making sure this devolved urban renewal strategy takes into account all potentially interested or affected communities and their needs beyond capital accumulation (Coaffee and Healey, 1979). Certainly it is not possible for government to please all citizens, but residents in cities that are in times of transition should be able to reach out to their government to voice their opinions on what change they are seeking in their city. Communities should be able to point out what needs to be done but shared urban governance often concentrates decision-making power in the hands of wealthier and more connected citizen participants (Jonas and Wilson, 1999).

It is important to recognize that increased community decision making can result from shared forms of urban governance (Martin, 2004). Urban citizens frequently demonstrate their desire to be a part of the planning process, especially when they perceive decisions are being made by unresponsive governing authorities, whether local, state or federal (Jim, 2004). Ghose (2004) wrote that the greater the financial influence an organization has the greater their influence will be in making governance decisions for the city. Kenny and Zimmerman (2004) stated that private parties frequently are best at taking advantage of a city’s history and geography in certain marketing strategies to help transition the city into new economic realities. Thus, multi-party, consensus-based planning is supposedly aiding in cities’ efforts to transition from economic stagnation to vibrancy through the marketing of urban geographical and historical assets. McCann (2001) accordingly sees collaborative planning as ways to widen the democratic planning
process in innovative ways. Academics have further theorized the forms that this collaborative, public/private planning for urban renewal takes. One such strategy promoted by entrepreneurial urban growth regimes is the Business Improvement District.

_Business Improvement Districts_

BIDs, like gentrified redevelopments, are specifically designed to help attract businesses and people to parts of cities that were once disinvested (Ward, 2007). The success of BIDs has attracted the attention of policy-makers from cities of all sizes around the globe (Ward, 2010). Business Improvement Districts are individually specific, formalized alliances between the public and private realm which operate at sub-municipal levels (Grossman, 2008). BIDs connect small and large businesses in a specific area to adhere to specific goals or a regimen that will better the well being of both the businesses involved as well as their surroundings. When the majority of local businesses agree on establishing a BID, they are also agreeing to pay additional fees or taxes to be a part of the BID, which the entity will then use to improve the local business environment (Mitchell, 2001). When BIDs are established, they have to deal with the legacy of an already built urban environment (Ward, 2007). Yet BIDs are supposed to reject modernist (managerial) planning and implement public participatory planning instead. In doing so Ward (2005) states that BIDs greatly redraw the boundaries between public and private control over space in the city. BIDs usually are headed by a board of directors that has great influence on the project via the board members’ connection or involvement in the local community (Ward, 2007). However, the BID nongovernmental characteristics
supposedly give them an edge in the world of privatized business as they work to reach small-scale goals outside government channels—unlike municipal agendas that tend to be much larger and more difficult to accomplish (Macdonald, 2000).

According to MacDonald (2000), BIDs have become one of the most important business-oriented aspects in local governance because they can use their creativity to produce economic gains at the micro-level. Because BIDs are managed by various business owners and operate in relative isolation from local government influence, they have increased flexibility to solve financial problems from within (Hoyt and Gopal-Agge, 2007). Business Improvement Districts and organizations that function like BIDs are documented to frequently increase a city’s area of desirable space and contribute greatly to the growth of the arts and entertainment (Ward, 2005). Ward (2007) also states that BIDs help manage the emotional landscapes of the city and also influence how people perceive their “downtown” while contributing to the upkeep, future development and positive marketing for their specific geographic location (2010).

Despite their attractiveness and supposed disconnection from government, BIDs cannot just be established by caveat anywhere at any time. There usually has to be a state legislative statute proposed for the creation of a BID (Ward, 2008). One of the sections of the 2010 West Virginia Economic Development Incentives1 is devoted to the explanation of the Business Improvement District Act and states that the authorization for BIDs in West Virginia can be found in W.Va. Code Chapter 8, Article 13A (Jackson Kelly, 2010). This act states that a municipality may provide financial and additional extended services for the creation of the district as well as funding for the continuation of services
within the district. This section of the West Virginia Economic Development Incentives also states that in order to initiate a BID there must be a signed petition of at least four owners of commercial property within the designated district with no less than 51 percent of combined property ownership in the proposed area. There are other ways cities are promoting entrepreneurialism, in addition to BIDs.

(Re)Imaging the City

Jessop, Peck and Tickell note that deindustrialization has brought about a crisis of identity in many cities (1999). Though Charleston is not a major global city (metropolitan statistical area being around 300,000 occupants), it still is suffering from the onset of deindustrialization – as it has seen a decline as a world leader in resource trade and extraction. Boyle notes that cities will often cling to economic sectors that were successful in the past in the hopes that they might be resurrected for future growth (Boyle, 1999). Today, however, growth regimes often work toward (re)making place identity in conjunction with their industrial history in ways that can be somehow profitable, even though the industrial economic sector is more or less defunct (Cox, 1999).

There are some similarities in how cities are combating deindustrialization while trying to make themselves attractive for business development. Harvey (1989) suggests that cities must strive to appear pleasant, creative and innovative to create the aura of a safe place to invest or to go and spend money in an international economy. Thus reinvestments in projects dealing with the social, physical and environmental
infrastructure are needed to attain a more cosmopolitan feel (Florida, 2002). Cities can attain this trendy, new-age feel through implementation of green urban renewal projects that are either original in their planning, or borrowed ideas from other cities. Culture has also become a very important selling point for cities today (Short, 1999). Cities are now in the business of promoting an idealized version of their history as passing years bring about changes in city appearances, economic base, social dynamics, and culture.

Festivals are now being used as marketing tools that aid in the reduction of negative local impacts of globalization/outsourcing; as well as to reduce insecurities concerning perceived emptiness of public spaces (Hughes, 1999). Multicultural histories are sold by cities as a “discourse of place” for place promotional activities that enhance the perception of urban vibrancy and tolerance (Macleod et. al, 2003). One of the main initiatives of Charleston’s current mayor, Danny Jones, has been to create many new festivals to promote the city as a cultural and economic leader within Appalachia, for example. A city of work and a city of play are two common ways in which boosterism is used to promote cities; though in times of hardship a pro-business environment is frequently promoted over cultural concerns (Short, 1999).

Urban boosterism is a common occurrence that happens in most American cities (Short, 1999). Short writes about how place promotion has always been needed in American cities because they have a much shorter history than many of their European counterparts. But of course these efforts have been ramped up today as cities compete for increasingly footloose investment capital in a global economy. He stated that those who promote the contemporary city act as ‘imagineers’ through their boosterism efforts,
which in turn give the city a new form of place and purpose. Short stated that promotion within downtown areas have mainly been private, not public, and that local chambers of commerce have been very helpful in merging public and private actions/opinions in regard to boosterism. In a post-industrial economy, capital now has more mobility. But other sectors of the economy are also mobile which means that cities must work to promote themselves as destinations for business and leisure as fickle industries like tourism and various conventions that occur in downtowns are not bound to a certain city in today’s hyper-mobile world. Place promotion is an increasingly important aspect of urban renewal as cities must compete to attract as much of this kind of economic activity as possible. Mark Boyle has coined the term ‘Urban Propaganda Projects’ (UPPs) where growth regimes try to reshape the image of the city in profitable ways. However, he notes that UPPs can sometimes cause municipal disputes rather than acting as driving forces for change within a city, which can hinder renewal projects within cities (Boyle, 1999).

Sustainable Urban Renewal

Many urban renewal projects are incorporating greening strategies. According to Chan and Lee (2007), sustainable urban renewal projects are extremely popular. There is not one set of credentials that define what green means in the urban context, but rather a myriad of concepts and ideas that work together to lessen the stresses on the local social and natural environments. Much has been written on urban greening movements. Some city governments and their policies towards going green are stronger than others, and in some cases the efforts a city has made to go green have been more driven by the local populous rather than by the movers and shakers holding governmental positions.
Another major factor that is helping drive the greening of cities is the post-industrialism that is occurring within them, which draws attention concerning how to positively reimage business or manufacturing sectors of local/regional economies. However, when cities aim to green their industrial sectors, resistance can occur as the notion of sustainability is rarely paired with capital gain, but most often paired with being a cost to industry and jobs. Thus greening frequently involves various projects that emphasize better incorporating various urban natural assets like river-ways and other waterfronts into the city.

Waterfront developments and other projects that reconstruct local ecosystems are incorporated to make the city a more “livable” place (Hagerman, 2007). Green development can also aid in increasing a city’s livability by moderating harsh urban climates and conserving biodiversity (Knuth, 2006). Green urban renewal projects should have concerns for ecosystem function while attracting patronage by connecting the downtown to amenities like waterfronts that embraces the city’s ecological assets. Though green urban renewal is supposed to help both the city and its residents, careful consideration of negatively affected people must be taken into consideration in the policies and planning behind urban renewal - green or not (Lees, 2008). Accordingly, Quastel (2009) notes that it is quite important to consider how nature is deployed in urban redevelopment schemes. Only then can we understand how nature is ‘brought back into’ the city in ways that may or may not be accessible to urbanites depending on their position in society. Some of the ways nature is supposed to be brought back into the city equitably are through various forms of ‘sustainable’ urban renewal.
Many people are striving to live and do business more sustainably. Sustainability is focused on long-term commitments spanning generations which should better the environments for generations to come (Martens, 2006). Sustainable urban renewal is centered on the concept of improving the socio-ecological fabric of cities while not harming- and possibly even enhancing- the natural world (Martens, 2006). Martens goes on to suggest that sustainable urban renewal has multiple domains (economic, ecological, and the socio-cultural). Hagerman (2007), suggests that in order for cities to become more sustainable places, urban development projects need to incorporate aspects of local nature. He discusses how Portland, Oregon is using urban watersheds that act as both parks and ecological cleansing areas in the downtown area in the form of urban renewal. These projects increase the city’s livability, thus increasing the quality of life – which in turn adds to attractiveness that makes more people want to visit/live downtown while ultimately improving local economic and human capitals. After all, a city that appears to be green has worldwide appeal and is attractive at all scales of society, especially when the attractiveness endures through time (Jim, 2004).

While et al. (2004) suggest that the perception of urban sustainability could be very important for the future of the urban economy. They note that entrepreneurialism is increasingly dependent on how downtown ecology and new environments are (re)constructed. Urban governments can also use urban sustainability projects to compensate for its past failures in planning (Slack Plaza Park in downtown Charleston is an example that will be discussed in this thesis). The ‘Sustainability Fix’ as While et al.
(2004, p. 550) call it, is used by urban policy makers to better the environment in the planning process in ways that promote urban economic growth.

It is increasingly vital for city officials to have a role in the ecological issues that their city is faced with in order to plan for and complete desirable sustainable policies (While et al., 2004; Martens, 2006). Within this idea of managing the physical urban environment, growth cannot be focused solely on land issues, but also air, water, and forests, for example. If only one aspect of the urban environment is managed, problems with total plan implementation are likely to arise and will be hard to combat (McCann, 2003). This is an increasingly important consideration as issues pertaining to the global environment are now devolving to the local level as national governments are increasingly seen as lacking the regulatory power to create and enforce environmental laws (Gibbs and Jonas, 2000). Thus scholars note that environmentalism and urban governance now go hand in hand as opposed to clashing with the urban economic sector as in previous eras of urban management. Gibbs and Jonas (2000) also point out how even though making a city more sustainable will cause some strife in all scales of government, the environment must be considered an important player in economic and institutional development.

Through the strengthening of political policy and practice, the ideology and implementation of greening needs to obtain more attention and support (resources). Green spaces also need to be strategically located throughout the city and comprehensive surveys need to be carried out in cities to identify areas where multiple forms of greening can be brought into practice (Jim, 2004). Environmental and natural resource
management practices have grown with the increases in urban environmental policy initiatives – thus increasing the need for urban governments and private firms to utilize environmental modeling programs in the planning process to aid in finding the best possible places to implement sustainable practices (Sterner, 2003).
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The field work for this study spanned from June 2011 – April 2012. Born and raised in Charleston, I was already familiar with the city and knew where I could find people who could answer my questions and provide recommendations for other people to interview via a “snowball” interview process (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2005). I was able to interview Charleston’s policy-makers (current city officials and a former mayor) and many members of the business community who are playing a vital role in how the city is governed and transitioning in these postindustrial times.

The research for this study was conducted using qualitative methods. They include semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzing relevant newspaper articles and planning documents. Qualitative research methodologies assist the researcher in focusing on how knowledge is constructed about the topic being studied (Boeree, 2005). Qualitative methods are based around the postulation that there are multiple realities created by different parties (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). This is why interviews are so important in the research process and gave me insight into how urban renewal projects are perceived by the people interviewed since they will all have differing roles as stakeholders in urban renewal in downtown Charleston. Baxter and Eyles (1997) also state how triangulation is one of the most important ways to establish credibility in research. The insights I gained from the interviews enabled me to gain an understanding between the data from my interviews and what was being printed and discussed in the local news sources. Triangulation was used in this research when the quotes from
interviewees were used to verify specific phenomenon about the urban renewal and greening process which is taking place in Charleston (Baxter and Eyles, 1997).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Throughout the research process I interviewed 17 local stakeholders and public officials involved with Charleston’s urban renewal projects to gain insight on how the city is run. Through these interviews I was able to understand which sectors of local government/community development agencies were involved with urban renewal/greening in Charleston. Furthermore, I was able to expand my knowledge of past urban renewal/greening projects and what the city has in store for future plans that relate to the realm of urban revitalization. Table I below lists the people who I interviewed and their current or past career positions.
Table 1: List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company/Organization</th>
<th>Title/Position</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charleston Area Alliance</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Public/Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor’s Office</td>
<td>Deputy Mayor</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanawha Regional Transit</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Public/Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston Planning Office</td>
<td>City Planner</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston Urban Renewal Authority (CURA) and Manpower</td>
<td>Chairperson and CEO</td>
<td>Public and Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURA</td>
<td>Director/CEO</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor’s Office</td>
<td>Former Mayor</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WV Secretary of State’s Office</td>
<td>Legislative Director</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreet Morgantown</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Public/Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embees Department Store</td>
<td>Former Owner</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston Engineering Office</td>
<td>Head Engineer</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor’s Office of Economic Development</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston City Management</td>
<td>City Manager</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riggs Corporation</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Market</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Roasters</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanawha Coin Shop</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major questions I focused on answering throughout this research process were to examine how the state and local government agencies along with the private sector are involved in Charleston’s urban renewal processes, how Charleston’s recent downtown transformations are parallel or contradictory to the ideology, theory and concepts supporting gentrification and Business Improvement Districts, why Charleston is not using BIDs, and also how Charleston has incorporated “ecofriendly or green” strategies into its urban renewal initiatives. Examples of some of the specific questions
that aided in my answering of my broad research questions which were asked to local business owners and policy makers can be found in the interview guide located in Table 2. Semi-structured interviews add strength to qualitative research because the researcher is able to adjust the conversation to obtain information that would otherwise go unanswered, especially when similar questions are asked repetitively to various interviewees in relation to the topic at hand. Semi-structured interviews also imply an interventionist approach that allows the interviewer to redirect the interview if the topics being discussed happen to steer in tangential directions (Dunn, 2005).

Table 2: Interview Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Questions</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How long have you been in your current position/lived in the Charleston area?</td>
<td>How has the issue of funding (private and public) influenced Charleston’s urban renewal process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have previous positions held aided in your current work?</td>
<td>Are there public/private partnerships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To your knowledge, what were the main causes Charleston’s downtown saw a decline in both infrastructure and population in the past?</td>
<td>Is more private or public funding being used in the urban renewal process in Charleston?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is the most beneficial urban renewal project which has taken place in Charleston in your opinion?</td>
<td>Are you able to disclose the information of who are (either people or companies) the biggest lenders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How would you compare what is going on in Charleston to other cities you have visited?</td>
<td>What legislation/government policies are responsible for public funding of urban renewal projects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are there organizations or community groups that push for “greening” of the city through urban renewal projects?</td>
<td>Would you say that Charleston has succeeded thus far in revitalizing the downtown area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How is Charleston incorporating “green or eco-friendly” ideals in its urban renewal?</td>
<td>• How has the issue of funding (private and public) influenced Charleston’s urban renewal process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there public/private partnerships?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is more private or public funding being used in the urban renewal process in Charleston?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you able to disclose the information of who are (either people or companies) the biggest lenders?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What legislation/government policies are responsible for public funding of urban renewal projects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would you say that Charleston has succeeded thus far in revitalizing the downtown area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical Questions</td>
<td>Storytelling Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How would you describe efforts by the city to incorporate “eco-green” aspects to past/current/future urban renewal?</td>
<td>• Can you explain how the process of urban renewal in Charleston has evolved throughout the years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are you familiar with Business Improvement Districts?</td>
<td>• Have there been any major controversies connected to certain urban renewal projects...if so can you explain them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If so, are you aware of the strategies of how cities are using them to attract people and business? (If they are not I will explain to them what BIDs are and give some examples of BIDs in other cities)</td>
<td>• If BIDs were used in Charleston, how do you think local business would be affected?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Closing Remarks/Questions

- Thank you very much for taking the time to let me interview you.
- Could you please contact me at ktblank19@gmail.com or by phone at 304.546.0657 if you think you would have any more additional information that would aid in my thesis?

The interviews were all recorded with a digital voice recorder as all interviewees agreed to allow our conversations to be recorded. Every subject interviewed has the right to privacy; therefore, the ethics of recording or not recording must be considered in this type of qualitative research (Fontana and Frey, 2002). In order to keep mentally focused and to maintain rapport during the interview, I took handwritten notes during every interview (Dunn, 2005). I asked questions which I had already prepared as well as ones that were developed on the spot which coincided with what was being discussed. When these questions of insight not previously written on the question sheet are asked, it portrays the flexibility of an unstructured interview, but one with directionality because of the prepared questions already established (Schensul et al. 1999).

Of all the people interviewed for this research study, only three of the 16 shared a personal relationship with me. Even though I am from Charleston and stay in touch with what is happening in the city via local media sources, I needed to talk with those whom I interviewed to obtain information that was not available through newspaper articles and news broadcasts. Therefore, it was important that I displayed the positionality of one who wanted to know as much as possible in order to extract all that I could from the interviewees (Mohammad, 2001). During most of the interviews the interviewees were asked of their opinions on what has been done in the realm of sustainable urban renewal...
in Charleston, as well as where they think the city is headed in those directions in the future.

Articles in two Charleston newspapers led me to the director of the Charleston Area Alliance – the local organization which acts as the chamber of commerce. I interviewed the director of CAA first because of CAA’s close connections with government officials and business owners in Charleston. The CAA director was able to introduce me to a number of people working on urban renewal in downtown Charleston. In fact, throughout the interview process, almost every public official that I spoke with had asked whether or not I had spoken with the CAA director. The Charleston Area Alliance therefore is highly important in regard to renewal in Charleston.

Interviews with the current Deputy Mayor, City Manager and former Mayor Hutchinson, allowed me to understand how the city is trying to change its image, not only as the state’s largest urban area, but also as an important Appalachian city. Interviewing the current Deputy Mayor and a past Mayor Hutchinson, allowed me to compare how the city was perceived by a previous governing administration 30 years in the past with the one in power today. Charleston has changed greatly in the past 30 years, so it was interesting to see the differing views of government regimes when analyzing the dynamics of the city.

Slack Plaza, the derelict park in the center of Charleston’s CBD which is in the process of being transformed into a sustainable park via the Federal Government’s Greening America’s Capitals Program, is connected to the city’s transit mall. Therefore I interviewed the manager of the Kanawha Regional Transit to see how a quasi-private
organization which handles the city’s public transit system is connected to the urban park
renewal process. Planning is always a factor in urban renewal, so the Charleston city
planner was also contacted and interviewed as a part of this research. The director/CEO
and a chairperson from the Charleston Urban Renewal Authority (CURA) were
interviewed for this study as that organization is comprised of mayor appointed officials
who act as both consultants and funders for various urban renewal projects throughout
the city.

I interviewed the Legislative Director for the West Virginia Secretary of State’s
Office to see how urban renewal is being approached by the state government – and what
role state government business plays in Charleston’s CBD. This is also important given
that state and local government sometimes have to work together on certain projects in
the CBD. By way of comparison with Charleston that lacks Business Improvement
Districts (BIDS), the Maintstreet Morgantown director was interviewed because that
West Virginian city has successfully incorporated BIDs in their downtown area. The
Mainstreet Morgantown director has even came to Charleston to give a presentation on
BID benefits to city officials.

The head city engineer was interviewed because the city’s engineering department
is responsible for drawing up many of the city’s urban renewal plans and overseeing
construction projects. The engineering department has also recently implemented a storm
water awareness program to keep pollution from entering the Kanawha River in the
downtown area and surrounding suburbs. The director for the Mayor’s Office of
Economic Development was interviewed because of the city’s initiatives to promote
parks and development in areas designated by the US Census as being communities in need in and around the city. Aside from interviewing those who hold public offices, private business owners such as a property developer and renter of significant amounts of office space in downtown Charleston, a former department store owner, and a landscape business owner were interviewed. During these interviews I obtained information on how they were/are involved in Charleston’s green urban renewal and business scene as well as what their opinions were on Charleston making the transition to becoming more revitalized and sustainable.

Secondary Sources

Charleston is the home of two newspapers, the Charleston Daily Mail and the Charleston Gazette. Newspaper articles were used to target potential interviewees and then to verify and examine data obtained during the interviews which add to the validity of the research. March 2011 was when the first newspaper articles were used for this study and I continued to read and refer to newsprint throughout the research and writing processes. This method of research is a way to bridge the gap between past and current happenings within the city which can bring awareness to varying aspects of study which would have otherwise remained hidden through other forms of qualitative research methods (Roche, 2005). Newspaper articles were not only used as sources for data but also for targeting those who needed to be interviewed in relation to the topics discussed in this thesis.
Data Analysis

Upon collection of the interview data, the audio recordings were transcribed and transferred to a computer using computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) as a way of backing up/storing the interview so they can later be analyzed. This allowed for common themes to be deciphered from all who were interviewed, which is one of the goals of qualitative research (Warren, 2002). These data were only made available to my graduate advisor and me throughout the writing process.

Upon completion of the research, the collected data were organized and transcribed when necessary so it was easily accessed during the thesis writing process. This allowed me to process the research so it could be referenced when comparing what was found in Charleston to the theories of urban renewal including Business Improvement Districts and sustainable redevelopment. The interviews and archival documents were also assessed to gain insight into partnership strategies of urban renewal in Charleston. The qualitative analysis method of coding is chiefly used for data organization, reduction and exploration (Cope, 2005). Coding data not only aids in the organization process but also allows the researcher to see and group findings in ways which might not have been thought of or planned during the beginning phases of the project. Coding of the interview transcriptions was done after they were printed out by highlighting and writing codes on the copies which were then grouped so they could be easily accessed during the writing process.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Charleston’s Advantageous Geography

This research aimed at uncovering how the urban renewal process in the city of Charleston, West Virginia, is occurring through governance and business strategies, as well as how the city is incorporating “sustainability” into the revitalization process. The research questions that were answered in this thesis examine 1) how state and local government agencies along with the private sector are involved in Charleston’s urban renewal processes. Also answered is 2) how has Charleston incorporated urban sustainability strategies in its renewal process downtown, and whether the renewal is linked to its industrial and Appalachian heritage Insight on how sectors of Charleston’s CBD resemble and function like Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) will also be provided in relation to these two main research questions. But first, it is important to understand how Charleston’s geography is important to its prospects for urban renewal and long-term growth. Charleston is a city that has certainly suffered negative effects from globalization in recent years, particularly in regard to industrial job losses. However, Charleston has been able to succeed as a strong urban Appalachian city despite deindustrialization. One reason is that it is the capital of West Virginia; another is its own geographic layout and centrality in relation to transportation and commerce.

The majority of the respondents interviewed for this research project suggested that Charleston’s central business district is healthier than either Huntington’s or Wheeling’s because of the locations and intersections of the interstate highway system. The Federal Government decided to link all of these cities with freeways in the 1960s;
however, the individual cities themselves had power to decide where the interstates would actually be placed within their municipal boundaries. Charleston is a meeting point for three major interstates, I-79, I-77, and I-64, and opted to have the interstates run directly through the central business district. Huntington and Wheeling placed their freeways outside of the CBDs, which negatively affects business/commerce today according to the interviewees.

The consequences of municipal decisions that are made during one point in time or within separate political regimes can still be seen many years later. The initial decision to route freeways through Charleston’s central business district was not without controversy. When the freeway construction began, Charleston’s central city was negatively affected as many residential neighborhoods were destroyed and/or separated. This caused a great deal of social upheaval within these urban neighborhoods, particularly among African American communities. Freeway construction initially therefore led to a massive shift in residency away from downtown Charleston. However, my interviewees suggested that freeway centrality in Charleston has paid off many years later in terms of commerce-related traffic that is not seen in other similar West Virginia cities.

In order to triangulate what my interviewees told me about Charleston in relation to Huntington and how their downtowns are extremely different, I made the trip to Huntington to compare the two Appalachian cities during normal weekday business hours. My interviewees were right. Most of the exits off of I-64 were fully two miles from Huntington’s downtown. The director of the Charleston Area Alliance (CAA) said
with confidence that if it wasn’t for the downtown Huntington location of Marshall University’s campus, the central business district would surely be in far worse shape. During my time spent in Huntington, I observed many more abandoned storefronts as compared to downtown Charleston, though I did not make a formal count. Despite the advantageous location of government and interstate highways, my interviewees suggested that Charleston’s CBD vibrancy is related to more complex forces of urban renewal. It became apparent during my research interviews that a few key stakeholders including city officials and private development agencies have been pivotal in sparking urban renewal in downtown Charleston.

One of the purposes of this study is to analyze a relatively small urban center in Appalachia to understand its governance and regime strategies dealing with urban renewal and greening processes. In order to carry this out, city officials, development agencies, and business owners who have great influence on how the city is run were interviewed. During the interview process, interviewees frequently suggested I speak with other players in Charleston’s urban renewal. For example, the director of the Charleston Area Alliance referenced and recommended I speak with the Deputy Mayor and City Manager. During my interviews with those respected individuals, they both inquired whether or not I had spoken with the CAA director. After the interview process was completed and the data I obtained from those who I spoke with had been analyzed, it was evident that I had discovered the major public and private players who work together and comprise Charleston’s current growth coalition/regime.
Charleston’s Growth Regime

The first major component to the city’s growth regime is without a doubt the current mayoral administration. Mayor Jones has acted as vociferous booster of Charleston. Since he was elected to office in 2003 he has worked particularly hard to remake downtown. In fact the major focus of the Jones Mayoral Administration, according to my interviewees, is to make Charleston the ‘cultural, recreational and economic capital of the Appalachian Region.’ Partly through the current mayor’s efforts, Charleston has an attractive waterfront park located on the banks of the Kanawha River within the CBD. Haddad Riverfront Park not only attracts people to events held there, but also the downtown area to shop, eat and recreate as the major mall, shopping/dining street (Capitol St.) and walking trail are connected or within walking distance from the park. Charleston now has a downtown ballpark to house their Pittsburgh Pirates Single A Minor League affiliate team, and the city has put a major emphasis on the upkeep and management of Charleston’s community centers and public parks during Mayor Jones’ time in office. During Jones’ time in office new ordinances and laws were implemented regarding how urban development must incorporate some aspect of ‘sustainability’ in their plans (mostly greenspace as opposed to green building initiatives). Also, more environmental awareness initiatives have been implemented such as the storm water drainage markers on urban drains, and revitalizing or creating new urban parks.

The second cog in Charleston’s growth regime is the Charleston Area Alliance (CAA). The CAA is an organization that formed from the confluence of three past organizations in Charleston and functions quasi-governmentally. The CAA is presently
comprised of the former city Chamber of Commerce, the Charleston Renaissance – an organization that focused on maintaining the city’s historical look while still functioning as a modern city (historical restorations), and the Business and Industrial Development Corporation (BIDCO) whose focus was on keeping big business and industry in and around Charleston. The current mission is a combination of what the past organizations did along with promoting the city and acquiring funding, mostly from state and Federal grants that are used to for upkeep or renewal purposes within the city.

The third major player in the composition of Charleston’s growth regime is the Charleston Urban Renewal Authority (CURA). CURA board members and other growth regime players in Charleston consider CURA to be of the nation’s most successful urban renewal authorities. CURA is also quasi-governmental in that it is not controlled by the mayor’s office but by a director, who is appointed by the board members who are themselves appointed by the mayor. CURA is an organization that promotes and funds many urban renewal projects around Charleston using its own funds generated from lease money from the stores in the Charleston Town Center Mall – as CURA owns the land the mall sits on. Although the construction of the mall hurt individual downtown retail stores and caused some urban residents to be displaced, many of my interviewees agreed that if it weren’t for the mall’s presence in downtown, downtown Charleston would not thrive to the capacity it does today. The city does not give CURA any capital to carry out their projects and the board members are not paid, only the director and secretary receive a salary. The mayor appoints board members from different sectors of Charleston’s business community so the organization can represent a diversity of business interests.
Though these board members may be selected by the mayor to aid his current administration, there are members presently serving on CURA that were selected by former mayors.

Another significant component in Charleston’s growth regime is the local business community itself. Business owners are not discouraged from aiding in the city’s planning process on urban renewal projects or with community events. My interviewees told me that city government needs to hear the voice of the local business community before decisions can be made in order to ensure that the city will continue to enhance commerce in a positive and productive manner. One of my interviewees who owns the Riggs Corporation in Charleston, said in this regard: “The city will invite us into the planning process by asking our opinions on what we think should be done in the areas around our buildings (businesses). Such as in the riverfront project, they asked my opinions and some of them were used.” The city contacted Riggs to attend Haddad Park planning meetings because as he owns the building on Kanawha Boulevard that demarcates the park to the east along the riverfront.

The Kanawha Regional Transit (KRT) is also another stakeholder in Charleston’s urban growth regime as they are in charge of Charleston’s public bus transit that brings many people into and out of downtown. The KRT has its main transit hub connected to Slack Plaza, a park in the center of downtown that is about to be revitalized to become a more ‘eco-friendly’ urban park. Slack Plaza has been proposed to be revitalized because city officials have recently stated that the current Slack Plaza transit is “barren, hot and unattractive.” (Charleston Daily Mail, 3.29.2011). KRT is working very closely with the
mayor’s office, CAA, and CURA to plan out and carry forth the revitalization of Slack Plaza which is view by the growth regime as pivotal to downtown Charleston’s future economic success.

Table 3: Composition of Charleston Urban Growth Regime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of Charleston’s Urban Growth Regime</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Charleston’s Mayoral Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Charleston Area Alliance (CAA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Charleston Urban Renewal Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Charleston’s Local Business Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kanawha Regional Transit (KRT)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Transformations in Charleston’s CBD Resemble Business Improvement Districts

After reading and perusing literature within the urban/economic geography focus, I became interested in Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and how they are able to change the socioeconomic dynamics within cities. After thinking about the theories behind BIDs, I could see possible connections between renewed areas of downtown Charleston and BID models discussed in the academic literature. During my research, however, I found that Charleston has not implemented BIDs in any of its urban renewal projects or its economic development schemes - even though many similarities apparently exist. So I needed to find out why Charleston’s growth regime is not using
BIDs, as well as to dig more into why Charleston’s downtown renewal in some cases apparently reflects the BID model.

Business Improvement Districts’ positive externalities, including increased commerce, are supposed to outweigh the relatively high costs associated with implementing them. My interviewees from the CAA and Mayor’s office both think BIDs are not used in Charleston because they are seen by businesses as an “extra fee” in accordance with the initiation laws clearly stated in the West Virginia Legislative Code Section 8 Subsection 13A (as can be seen in Appendix A). Even though BIDs are seen as being negative because they cost business owners extra, many of my interviewees for this thesis said that they think BIDs will soon be formed in the areas around the city that already function as quasi-BIDs once the economy picks up.

The Charleston Urban Renewal Authority (CURA), however, already manages revitalized areas in Charleston’s downtown in ways that mimic BID concepts. The Charleston Urban Renewal Authority is run by officials appointed by the mayor who decide how much public funding will be used in various revitalization projects (Strong-Treister, 2011). CURA goes into partnership with the private sector businesses that also invested money in projects that appear to be designed to attract what Richard Florida has named the “creative class.” For example, in 1997, an abandoned train station in downtown Charleston was transformed into Capitol Market - both an indoor and open-air market full of produce, specialty wines and cheeses, and high-end restaurants (Figure 3).
The Capitol Market is now overseen by a board consisting of local business owners, customers, and various community leaders. They work together to ensure sustainable practices by encouraging its food vendors to sell West Virginia products as an explicit attempt to build excitement for local products in the minds of local people and proving that sustainable business in Charleston can be achieved (Capitol Market, 2011). The market exemplifies mixed-use urban redevelopment in which many classes are interacting in both a work and recreational environment, and is a major contributor to the city’s new image. The Capitol Market also exemplifies a BID because the business owners all pay certain fees to the market’s operational office allowing them to operate their businesses there, and in turn they have some power in determining how the market
should be operated and governed. Despite the fact that the Capital Market is an area in the city that exemplifies many aspects of the BID model, none of the owners of the shops that I spoke with there had ever heard of BIDs.

I interviewed a Capitol Market business owner who runs a produce/specialty products shop. I asked him about how the businesses of Capitol Market manage their location. He told me that the owners of the Capitol Market shops negotiate with one another regarding how the market is structured and promoted. The produce/specialty foods store whose owner I spoke with is located in the front end of the market near the larger of the two parking lots. This store is the first one people pass as they make their way through the market. This location comes with a price, but since the owner has one of the most popular stores, he said his opinion is more highly respected during the meetings – which correlates to what Lloyd et al. (2003) stated in that certain businesses or entities have higher powers of influence than others within most BIDs.

Regarding the creation of Capitol Market, the owner of the produce and specialty food shop stated that he knew Charleston was in the midst of revitalizing its downtown when the Capitol Market site was chosen to be the location for this unique business idea. Money for upkeep comes primarily from the rental fees paid by all vendors, inside from individual businesses and outside from vendors who rent space to sell anything from local fruit in the summer to Christmas trees during the holiday season. However, the inside vendors pay the bulk of the money needed to sustain the market’s maintenance, marketing and image. To oversee the market, the West Virginia State Department of Agriculture pays the salaries of some of the employees in the market’s operation office to
ensure the market keeps operating with the local environment and city image in mind. I
was very surprised that the business owner/CURA board member had never heard of the
BID concept only because CURA is an organization that deals directly with urban
renewal and funding allocation. The lack of knowledge of BIDs in Charleston by all the
people I interviewed has led me to conclude that BIDs are more so recognized and
implemented in larger cities that have greater number of people, businesses and potential
space for renewal.

Another area of Charleston that apparently mimics a BID is the area around Slack
Plaza Park. On the west side of the park are adjacent restaurants and businesses along a
walkway leading to the Charleston Town Center shopping mall. Originally, these
businesses chose this spot in order to cater to customers who were using the park and
KRT transit. Now, these businesses are more so supported by the additional customer
traffic generated by the nearby Charleston Town Center Mall. To the east is Summers
Street, which in the last ten years has been developed as a popular and trendy strip of
businesses. On Summers Street there are two upscale eateries, a trendy smoothie store,
and a high end coffee shop complete with a chocolate candy operation sub-business
inside – see Figure 4. Brawley Walkway was developed to connect the trendy businesses
of Summers Street and Slack Plaza to the Capitol Street business area. A custom shoe
making and repair shop and coin collectors store are located in Brawley Walkway to add
to the mix of high-end businesses in this area – see Figure 5. Collectively, these
businesses fit the BID model for a small zone of high-end, specialty commerce.
Figure 4: A view of the trendy businesses along Summers St. located across from Slack Plaza Park that resembles a potential Business Improvement District.
Figure 5: Brawley Walkway connects Capitol St. and Summers St. and opens up to Slack Plaza Park which can be seen in the background.

It is important to emphasize that these trendy businesses are not a part of an official BID. However, like a formal BID they do cooperate on a limited basis and they work together to enhance their location’s image as well as that of the Charleston CBD. I interviewed business owners along Summers Street and they told me they work together to keep the trash out of the street and in the dumpsters behind their businesses. They also commonly promote the revitalization of Slack Plaza as there is a common perception that its renovation will serve their businesses well. My other interviewees mention business
improvement in this area as a reason they are eager to renovate Slack Plaza. However, one of the business owners on Summers Street who I talked to said that the city was not as inclusive as they could be with the businesses in the planning process for Slack Plaza. My interviewees from this group of businesses seem to suggest that this area of Charleston’s CBD would benefit from further sharing governance in local redevelopment in ways that mimic the BID model. Despite the area’s increasing trendiness, it still faces what my interviewees consider to be hurdles toward creating the perfect urban image.

Of major concern to these interviewees and others in Charleston’s growth regime is an urban convenience store located on the north side of Summers Street that sells alcohol and tobacco to the people that currently loiter in Slack Plaza. In conjunction with redeveloping Slack Plaza, the mayor’s office and KRT are interested in getting rid of the ‘troublesome’ businesses they perceive to facilitate substance abuse in the park. However they are reluctant to use eminent domain as a controversial way to clear out a business from the CBD. My interviewees, especially the city officials, noted that once the park is revitalized and more people from higher economic classes start to patronize it, the troublesome activities of loitering will likely cease to be an issue for the surrounding trendy businesses.

Today in Charleston, Capitol Market and Summers Street are the kinds of locations that attract people to the CBD, altering people’s perception of a city after urban renewal projects are carried out. My interviewees suggest that some of these areas in Charleston that resemble BIDs not only add to the city’s image, but also greatly contribute to the city’s economy - especially in the summer when more people are going
downtown and spending money. They note that businesses in these BID-like locations organize festivals and entertainment events to draw crowds (some events attracting people from all over the nation) to attend car shows, chili cook-offs, Live on the Levee Summer Concert Series, and art exhibits. This makes summer the most important time of the year for local businesses and the CBD to make money and promote their urban Appalachian image. These events are major money makers and attract people from all over the country. For instance, I spoke with a gentleman at the 2nd Annual Jet Ski Festival held at Haddad Riverfront Park. He had traveled to West Virginia with his two jet skis all the way from California for the second time because of the fun he had during the first festival. It is people and experiences like the Californian’s that give assurance to Mayor Danny Jones that his growth regime is successfully achieving its goal of making Charleston ‘The Business, Cultural and Recreational Capital of Appalachia.’

Paying for Urban Renewal in Charleston via Private and Public Sources of Funding

By law, every city in West Virginia is required to have a comprehensive land-use plan and Charleston’s gets updated roughly every ten years. Land use plans change sooner or later than this approximate time period depending on when specific mayoral administrations are elected into office. The current plan for Charleston seeks to connect the State Capitol Complex with the CBD via revamped housing and park creation. The plan also encourages sustainable development within the city by improving the local infrastructure and promoting sustainable practices exhibited in Charleston’s first sustainability fair last summer. My interviewees told me the focus in this plan has
recently shifted to sustainable urban renewal in the CBD. Yet funding has become a problematic issue. Thus future renovation aspects of downtown like the renovation of Slack Plaza will have to be carried out with Federal grant money. However, Charleston’s growth regime has created what it considers to be sustainable redevelopment in the past without the assistance of Federal funding.

The creation of the Charleston Town Center Mall – the city’s premier shopping mall – is a good example. My interviewees told me that the decision to build a major shopping center in the compact downtown, rather than out in the suburbs, has benefited the commerce economy downtown while also reducing urban sprawl. Funding for subsequent urban renewal projects in the CBD is now available because of the construction of Town Center Mall. After speaking with the director of CURA and to former Charleston Mayor John Hutchinson, I learned that all of the funds generated from the rent stores pay to operate a business within the Town Center Mall go to CURA, as CURA own the rights to the land that the mall sits on.

This was an ingenious plan organized by the Hutchinson Administration and is the reason that CURA considers itself as one of most successful urban renewal authorities in the United States. Some CURA funds are used to pay the salaries of the director and secretary, but the vast majority is devoted to organizations or projects that contribute to the urban renewal process in Charleston. Sustainability, loosely defined, is also supposed to be incorporated into Charleston’s urban renewal projects. When a new project or renovation takes place, CURA and the Mayor’s office have mandated that some sort of
loosely defined sustainability or greenspace aspect must be worked into the project’s plans.

CURA is not the only organization and funding source that contributes to the urban renewal process in Charleston. The city has its own funding to allot to certain projects. These city-issued funds are greatly enhanced via grant matching from the Federal Government and private donors. The director of the Mayor’s Office for Community and Economic Development was interviewed for this study and he made clear to me how the Federal Government works together with the city government in grant/fund matching. For instance, during project development and construction, the city will set aside certain amounts of money for certain project goals once they know how much potential Federal Grant money they will be able to obtain. Then, throughout the project, the city will [note this is the example given to me during the interview] log 10 hours to the Federal Government’s 38 hours, thus dividing up and combining the funding and project expenses/cost in that fashion. In Charleston when the Federal Government steps in and aids in a city project, the funding amounts from the government usually exceed the local funding amounts – these included Community Development Block Grants which are widely used in the greater Charleston area.

Despite the importance of Federal grants, certain state of the art redevelopment projects in the CBD such as the Haddad Riverfront Park and Amphitheatre would never have been completed if it wasn’t for private sources of funding. Betty Schoenbaum, wife of the founder of the Shoney’s Restaurant and Capitan D’s restaurant chains, is arguably the most widely known and greatest philanthropists in the Charleston area, especially
when it comes to parks. I argue that she and other high-profile people donate so much money to urban renewal projects that they should be considered a part of Charleston’s urban growth regime. Aside from Schoenbaum’s funds putting the finishing touches on the retractable cover on the Haddad Park Amphitheatre seating area, she has also contributed to the upkeep and revitalization of many of the city’s public recreation facilities and community centers which cater in some way to most Charlestonians.

Figure 6: A view of Haddad Riverfront Park which exemplifies how Charleston is trying to connect its urban renewal projects to its industrial past. Note the stage and how it resembles the wheel of a sternwheeler, boats used in water transport.
The city manager’s office completed a survey/assessment of how much it would cost to revitalize the waterfront park. Plans were made to make the park more attractive because of its closeness to Charleston’s business community, especially Capital St. and the Town Center Mall (both within walking distance). Thus an attractive riverfront park near businesses would give people more incentive to come to downtown and spend their money. The day the city manager’s office was to turn in the survey results to the city to see how much funding they would be able to use on the park, West Virginia State Senator Byrd’s office called and asked if any extra money for any urban renewal projects was needed. The Senator’s office had extra funds from an unused Aramark Grant he was willing to donate to the city. The Charleston City manager said they needed about 2.6 million dollars to finish the park as was estimated in the plans/survey. Senator Byrd donated the funds – ultimately saving the city the bulk of what it would have cost to revamp the riverfront park. Haddad Riverfront Park adds a unique look to Charleston’s downtown, and achieves the growth regime’s goal of better connecting Charleston to its Appalachian industrial roots (the stage which sits near the water is reminiscent of a old sternwheeler used in the days of river transportation prominence – see Figure 6 above).

**Public/Private Partnerships Boost Charleston’s Image**

Charleston’s growth regime knows that the city is unlikely to attract new manufacturers and needs to focus instead on different businesses to the CBD via cultural and environmental attractions. The Deputy Mayor of Charleston said during our interview:
There are things going on here, we can boast about being a small enough city where you can get to know the mayor and your city council members on a first name basis and yet a big enough city where there are things to do just about every weekend, some more than others, and more in the summer than winter, but there are things to do here that make the city a more user friendly and attractive place for people of all ages who want to spend time here…We want Charleston to be or have the identity to be the cultural, economic and recreational center of the Appalachian region.

Charleston has always been a financial center to the surrounding natural resource extractive economy in Appalachia. Now the city’s downtown is also primarily comprised of service sector employers like government agencies, law offices, accountancy firms, healthcare systems, and educational facilities. Charleston has become a strong leader in cardiovascular medicine because the state of West Virginia has some of the highest rates of heart disease in the country. The presence of high tech sector employment in downtown Charleston is a positive attribute according to my interviewees that can be marketed to spur more economic growth. The growth regime in Charleston sought to appoint a CURA director that could better tap into that potential for long term growth.

By the time of our interview, the director of CURA had held the position for a little less than a year. The board wanted to hire somebody with great experience in the urban renewal and planning process but also wanted someone who could promote the image of the city. Here is what the CURA director had to say about Charleston and the
impression the downtown retail scene provides to businesses and other cities looking to emulate Charleston’s growth strategy,

As a complete outsider that has no allegiances or political agenda, it appears to me without knowing a great deal of Charleston’s history, the compact downtown and shopping mall seems to be a net positive to the community, rather than suffer the traditional suburbanization of retail that most cities have gone through, the mall has kept a significant amount, of quality retail in the city center, which has various benefits in terms of reducing sprawl, reusing existing properties, and maintaining some economic strength in the middle of city, while many (other) communities are hurting for revenues because they have to maintain infrastructure and yet the money has moved outside of the city and tax revenues and fees so they have a tough time maintaining the CBD. Interestingly, our agency maintains ownership of land and we get revenues from that, we take that money literally that the mall gives and reinvest that in blighted areas. So it’s a self sustaining or providing many more benefits to the community. Because it did stay in the downtown and being used as the economic driver for other redevelopment, and of course with all the people that it brings to the downtown area there is bound to be spin off economic activity with people eating and visiting non-mall retailers and events and etc...
The CURA director also pointed out for me many of the problems with Charleston’s downtown layout that need to be changed in order to better promote an appearance of vibrancy. Many of the high-rise office buildings are not using the street-level floors for retail or dining which is reducing the attractiveness of the CBD. Another ill of the city as pointed out by the director of CURA was that there are too many parking structures in the downtown area. The director explained how above-ground parking garages in the downtown area are eye sores and reduce the amount of space that could be used to make downtown Charleston more attractive. Charleston has many abandoned parking lots/store lots in the downtown area that could have been delegated/purchased for public parking instead of the parking garages that block views of downtown. Somewhere in the city code it was stated that the parking garages must be built for maximum capacity – a problem because the only time they are used to their max is during the holiday shopping season. Because of these negative attributes of downtown Charleston, the CURA director looks forward to implementing greener urban renewal strategies in Charleston by promoting the city’s close ties to the surrounding natural environment and its compact central business district.

Many of my other interviewees from Charleston’s growth regime were concerned that Charleston needs to promote the city image via increasing urban living initiatives. As in any city, there are a wide range of classes of people that live in the downtown area. The residential area that connects the state capitol complex to the CBD has undergone gentrification related improvements in the form of historic housing renovations and park creation. My interviewees, however, were concerned about promoting more middle class
people living in the CBD itself. The growth regime hopes to increase the CBD’s
livability via urban renewal projects such as the anchor projects I discuss in this study,
and also through future endeavors such as creating river trail systems to connect
downtown parks with parks outside the city. My interviewees suggest these kinds of
projects make more people want to live, work, and recreate in the downtown area and by
extension spend more money. The main demographic that the growth regime is trying to
attract are young professionals. The growth regime in Charleston is also trying to get rid
of the powerful stereotype among professionals that living downtown is particularly
dangerous, as there are no major issues with crime in downtown Charleston.

The emphasis on making the CBD a more attractive place to live for professionals
is a rather new development by the growth regime. Charleston’s current mayor is
promoting it heavily. However, John Hutchinson, the former mayor who held office from
1971-1980 disagreed and wondered why people would ever want to live in a downtown
apartment when they could live in a neighborhood such as his with a garden and some
trees. However, the geography of Charleston’s compact CBD surrounded by hillsides and
green neighborhoods is generally considered to be an aspect worth promoting.
Charleston’s planning department is promoting its compactness as a means to manage
future growth. The head city planner said during our interview, “Smart-growth
encourages compact development, mixed-use development retail with living quarters on
top in the downtown area and multiple transportation modes downtown other than the
automobile.” Charleston is in the process of constructing bike lanes in the streets, and
transforming an old-abandoned railway bridge that crosses the Kanawha River on the
edge of the downtown area and turning it into a ‘nature walk trestle’ that will overlook the downtown area – see Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: These displays depict the benefits of the proposed Kanawha Trestle Trail. The signs are located in the lobby of the city courthouse outside of the Charleston city manager’s office. The information on the displays describes the phases of the project as well as how the city’s image and economy will be boosted after it is constructed.
The trestle walkway though would be very expensive as it is estimated to cost around 20 million dollars to complete. Even though the trestle is projected to cost so much, the city manager and head city engineer are very optimistic that this project will be completed in the near future and will promote downtown Charleston as a more sustainable place to live and do business. The Charleston Planning Department, in consultation with the growth regime, actively encourages these kinds of projects that it considers sustainable so that downtown Charleston can have the image of being on the cutting edge of smart growth.

How Sustainable Development is Loosely Defined in Charleston

Because Charleston and the surrounding Appalachian region has such strong ties to the coal and natural gas industries, many of the people that I interviewed for this thesis stated that this may be why cities in West Virginia like Charleston have historically been reluctant to adopt sustainable urban redevelopment initiatives. The Legislative Director at the West Virginia Secretary of State’s Office that I interviewed said in this regard, “When you have so much coal why spend so much money on new technology/infrastructure in going green for good…it takes a heavy investment and the state is unwilling to do so.” Though partly true, this quote does not take into account or explain how Charleston’s growth regime has apparently been able to break free (at least partially) from the ideals and concepts that going green will hurt its economy by finding ways to successfully incorporate sustainable strategies in its urban renewal process. My interviewees suggest that most redevelopment plans in Charleston have some
sustainability planning as part of the process, though there is not one universal definition of sustainability by which to measure redevelopment.

Redevelopment Plans for Slack Plaza

Slack Plaza revitalization has received much recent attention by Charleston’s growth regime. For an image of Slack Plaza Park, see Figure 8 below. It is a good example of urban renewal orchestrated by public and private stakeholders within the growth regime focused on profitable sustainable redevelopment in the CBD. It consequently figured prominently in the narratives of sustainable urban growth as told by many of my interviewees and therefore is worth mentioning here in some detail. Despite its status as a hub for public transit, Slack Plaza is a park that has fallen into disrepair and is largely avoided by potential parks patrons. Charleston received Federal grant money from the Environmental Protection Agency to revamp the park into a more sustainable park under the Greening America’s Capitols Project put in place by the Obama Administration. The director of the Charleston Area Alliance was the one most responsible for acquiring the EPA Greening America’s Capitals Project funds through grant writing. Heavy CAA involvement in Slack Plaza demonstrates how closely quasi-governmental groups work with municipal players in Charleston’s growth regime to plan for urban redevelopment. This also demonstrates that the growth machine in Charleston must work together to achieve the overall goals of the city, which do not just come from government, organizations or people alone, but are generated by shared forms of urban governance.
Efforts to renew Slack Plaza involve enhanced negotiations between the mayor’s office, the KRT, CAA, and CURA to prevent complications that have arisen in the past from attempts at urban renewal in Charleston’s CBD. In the past when the streetscapes and sidewalks along the city’s main business district on Capitol Street were rebuilt, oversized sidewalks and granite lined corners made it impossible for buses to make the turns necessary to access important downtown bus stops. This prohibited busses from collecting and depositing people who work, shop, and recreate in the businesses along Capitol Street. The manager of the KRT was quoted as saying, “People ride buses for two reasons; to either make money or spend money.” Thus this disruption made subsequent working relations between the mayor’s office, local businesses, CAA, and KRT much closer. This had much bearing on the revitalization plans for Slack Plaza. While KRT is a relatively small player in Charleston’s growth regime, the KRT now works very closely with the CAA and City Planning office to ensure that Slack Plaza redevelopment ensures a successful transit operation. Although Charleston’s KRT is not as prominent or important perhaps as some other cities’ transit operations, my interviewees told me that the people of Charleston are still quite dependent on the KRT. They note that it is an important factor in the future success of Charleston as a city of commerce.
Slack Plaza today is not a desirable urban park. From the air (Figure 8 above) the park looks like it has plenty of shade trees scattered throughout which add beauty and shade for park users. This view of the park is very misleading and gives the park the portrayal of being a place of respite within the city. On the street level it becomes apparent that the park is under-patronized, however. Located in the middle of Charleston’s central business district, Slack Plaza Park is supposed to have two operational functions: one being the city’s main transit station for the bus fleet of the
Kanawha Regional Transit (KRT) and two, as a city park to cater not only to those waiting to catch their next bus but also to local business people and citizens who want to spend time relaxing and enjoying the views this urban park has to offer during their stay in downtown. Transformations taking place to make Slack Plaza a more sustainable park in the middle of the downtown area is currently a hot topic in Charleston.

My interviewees told me that Slack Plaza Park is not the vibrant urban public park it could be. According to city officials’ recent statements, the current Slack Plaza Park and transit area is “barren, hot and unattractive” (Caudill, 3.29.11). The park is now a popular hangout for the city’s homeless and those who need a public place to use drugs and drink alcohol. Certainly this is not an unusual use for urban public spaces; however Charleston’s growth regime is concerned about Slack Plaza because it is the geographical center of downtown. The city has many forested parks around the downtown area, but this centrally located park is receiving much attention because of its potential to contribute to the surrounding business community if more well-to-do patrons feel comfortable using the park while shopping in surrounding businesses.

In September of 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency chose Charleston as one of five capital cities to receive “Greening America’s Capitals” grant funding (Balow, 2011). One of the reasons Charleston was picked for this program, according to Rebecca Mizikar (who is mentioned in the *West Virginia Gazette* newspaper article as the founding partner of the Pittsburgh, PA based Origin4Design company which is working alongside the growth regime for the new park design), was that there were very consistent suggestions from local people and businesses in regard to what should be done with the
Many stated that they wanted more trees to produce more shade and more greenspace in the center of downtown through which people can walk while going from one part of downtown to another.

The EPA Greening America’s Capitols Project is funded by money from the EPA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) under the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (EPA, 2011). The mission of these projects is “to help state capitals develop an implementable vision of distinctive, environmentally friendly neighborhoods that incorporate innovative sustainable building and greener infrastructure strategies.” The EPA makes clear these efforts will be developed with close ties to Charleston’s urban development authority. This form of urban renewal would not be possible in Charleston without the help of the Federal Government in cooperation with the growth regime dedicated to making Charleston a better functioning, more attractive and vibrant city in the heart of Appalachia. There are many challenges to completing the revitalization of Slack Plaza, however.

I went to the top of a parking garage across the street from Slack Plaza to take pictures of the park from overhead. From some of these initial aerial photos, such as seen in Figure 8, the park looks as though it has plenty of greenery and would be a nice place to relax while spending time in a downtown park. This view of the park is very misleading and gives the park the false portrayal of being a place of respite within the city. On the street level it is easily seen how this park really functions as an over-sized concrete bus stop. The park’s only green aspects are some neglected trees and some
untended flower gardens surrounded by an entirely concrete surface. People cannot recreate on concrete that is scattered with raised flower beds and picnic tables which are used more as seats for loiterers than they are for eating by people patronizing surrounding businesses. All of the park’s fountains are waterless, the flowerbeds are flowerless, and the ledges to the shrub gardens and fountains are lined with anti-loitering/sitting spikes – see Figure 9 below.

![Figure 9: A view of Slack Plaza from the ground level. The waterless fountains are lined with loitering prevention spikes. The city has no intentions of fixing the fountains or removing the spikes until the park is revitalized.](image)

While observing, I saw people in the park doing what appeared to be drug deals. I also saw people exiting the local marts with alcoholic beverages who then proceeded to
enter the park and consume them. I also witnessed loiterers harassing people who walk
through the park to get to the Town Center Mall entrance near the west end of the park.

Public health is a huge issue discussed by researchers who study urban parks. Parks are supposed to be places where people can go to rid themselves of stress and engage in physical and recreational activities (Krenichyn, 2006). The proposed plan for Slack Plaza revitalization can be seen in Figure 10 below. The revitalized plans for the park include more greenspace, and art walk, and perhaps even a winter ice skating rink. A CURA board member that I interviewed stated, “Let’s face it, Slack Plaza is not, and won’t ever be Rockefeller Plaza!” However, the modest plans for the park look promising and may help boost the area around Slack Plaza in terms of patron appeal. Plans to build the winter ice rink are doubtful; however, as the city manager told me that there simply is just not enough money to create it at this point. He said that they need to stick to the basics in greenspace production to make this more of a sustainable urban project because that is what the EPA stipulates in its granting process, anyway.
Charleston’s growth regime is excited about the opportunity to revamp the park because, as my interviews told me, the park is near two undesirable discount markets for alcohol and tobacco products. One business is across the street from Slack Plaza and the other is located directly beside the street where people board the buses from within the park. My interviewees told me the park also needs renewal because of the high volumes of ‘street people’ that congregate there. The owners of the trendy businesses such as the coffee and high end chocolate shop located across from the park on Summers Street told me they have even raised their prices in the past to keep the loiterers out of their shops and away from their customers. The hope of the growth regime is that a renewed park
will create more greenspace for downtown and attract more desirable patrons and
discourage unwanted businesses and homeless people from being in the area. When I
spoke with people mostly walking quickly through the park during my research, many
said they are eager to use the park more fully once it is redone. On the other hand, I also
spoke with different groups that use the park for loitering and those people were excited
too because they felt that the city was redoing this park for them. They did not plan to
leave the park because it is so close to where they carry out their everyday social
activities.

Charleston’s growth regime considers itself fortunate to have been awarded EPA
funding in its efforts to make its capital more sustainable and appealing to what it
considers desirable patrons. This centrally located park- once revamped- will likely
enhance the image of downtown Charleston and make the urban area a more livable and
aesthetically pleasing place for all to enjoy. Its centrally located position in Charleston’s
downtown gives Slack Plaza much potential to make downtown Charleston a busier and
more profitable place. If it wasn’t for the hard work of Charleston’s growth regime in
applying for the grant, Slack Plaza’s revitalization would likely be impossible. All
sectors of the regime have greatly contributed to making it possible to redo the park, but
the most significant contributor in the park’s renewal process was the CAA’s application
for the EPA grant funds.

When I started work on my thesis early in 2011 the plans for Slack Plaza’s
revitalization had just been released. The release of the master plan was in conjunction
with the Federal Government making public its intent to award CAA funding for the
project. Originally the plans stated that work on the park would start in June 2011, but as of spring 2012 no construction or signs of revitalization have occurred in Slack Plaza. One major setback with the project has to do with the function of the park also as a transit hub, which is believed by CURA and others to encourage loitering by homeless people. Evidently the current loiterers in the park are not considered compatible with the plan for sustainable greenspace. Originally CURA was not involved with the revamping of Slack Plaza but as the confusion towards what to do with the park and its loiterers has risen, the organization has weighed in on the controversy. The CURA director said,

We (CURA) have become more involved. I have begun to suggest to individuals involved in the plaza redevelopment effort that having the transit transfer facility there, even if improved, will never be compatible with creating a welcoming open space for downtowners and visitors to use. This is based on my experience elsewhere and having been through this exact challenge before. The problem is not the bus riders waiting to transfer; it is the transients who are attracted by this activity and who if asked to move along can simply claim to be “waiting for a bus.” Without the transfer facility and associated activity, the area ceases to be “a hangout.” Keep in mind that the transit facility there is NOT a bus stop for people coming downtown – it is a transfer to other bus lines. It is a waiting area. Anyone coming downtown can get off at any number of stops throughout the area, closer to their destination. As long as this facility is there, the plaza will be an uncomfortable place for workers and
families. As time passes, I suspect our agency will be asked to contribute financially to the improvements and you can be sure that we will express our ideas as designs are developed.

Despite the setbacks in implementing the plans for Slack Plaza, my interviewees told me the city is fortunate to have acquired these funds. Sometimes the Federal government, through funding mechanisms, can dominate decision making that might displace local forms of urban governance (Lauria, 1999). However, the opposite of what Lauria mentioned seems to be happening in Charleston as the Federal EPA is working with the local government and firms to revamp Slack Plaza. Though national grant money is being used for the main source of funding, local organizations such as CAA and the municipal planning commission are largely deciding what happens in downtown. Of course they work with guidance from the EPA as certain aspects to the revitalization must meet the sustainable criteria standards the grant was based around. It remains to be seen how the redevelopment of Slack Plaza unfolds as requirements for sustainable development by the EPA come into conflict with local realities like vagrancy and loitering (for more on this see Coaffee and Healey, 1979).

The Appalachian Power Park

Another example of supposedly sustainable downtown redevelopment is West Virginia Power’s Appalachian Power Ballpark – home to a Class A Minor League affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates organization – see Figure 11 below. The Deputy Mayor of Charleston I interviewed gave me his definition of sustainable redevelopment when I
interviewed him. He connected sustainability with the reuse of downtown buildings in order to save materials and labor in the construction of a new building outside of downtown that would just leave usable and derelict buildings as eye sores downtown. An avid fan and promoter of the West Virginia Power baseball organization, the Deputy Mayor explained how he was able to influence the creation the state of the art downtown ballpark in an area of downtown that was formerly a brownfield site surrounded by unused industrial warehouses. The ballpark was built in 2005 and moved the team’s home location from the Charleston suburb of Kanawha City to downtown. The move helped Charleston look like a more innovative and vibrant city – as the ball park is positioned in the downtown area adjacent to the interstate for all to see as they drive by.

The Deputy Mayor described the ballpark as sustainable development because the playing field was created on top of the brownfield site and incorporates the abandoned warehouses adjacent to the in the park. The team’s front offices, box seats, parking, a field-level restaurant, as well as office space for rent or purchase have all been created out of an abandoned warehouse that was originally constructed in 1915 for what was at the time Charleston’s lucrative furniture industry. This revitalized warehouse is the base, foundation and backdrop for the ballpark. These renovated structures also promote Charleston’s history as a vibrant center of commerce and provide visitors with a historic image of the city and a sense of nostalgia for its days gone by.
The Appalachian Power Park has included in its structure old warehouses from Charleston’s Furniture District. The warehouse houses the baseball organization’s home office, offices for sale/lease, a baseball themed restaurant, as well as box seats for game/concert viewing. The reuse of old industrial structures is a way Charleston’s growth regime has been able to incorporate its past into what it considers its sustainable urban renewal process.

The Deputy Mayor stated that the ballpark is near other new redevelopment projects that cumulatively help bring people to Charleston’s CBD where they can patronize more than one attraction. He said in this regard,

There is the ballpark, the Capitol Market and the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences [all urban redevelopment projects promoted by the current
mayoral regime], all three things that are destinations for people, so in that sense as we are able to encourage people to come to Charleston with three things relatively close together, shopping at the Capitol Market, watching a game or performance at the ball park or Clay Center, and make it more of a destination to try to get past the “coming and going” that is part of the synergy and community development that makes Charleston a more attractive city.

However, the city has been criticized by outside consulting firms such as Sasaki Associates (Interview with Deputy Mayor, 2011) out of Boston that have aided in planning for a more sustainable and attractive CBD in Charleston. The negative critique of this area of town that has been totally revitalized in recent years is that because the ballpark, Capitol Market, and Clay Center are all so close together and near the interstate, people are able to come and go as they please via automobile. Although these places are easily accessed by car, the Sasaki firm stated that the ease of access with automobiles adds a suburban element to this northeast section of downtown and reduces people’s economic impact on the downtown area if they are not walking past the restaurants and shops that happen to be within walking distance of the stadium, market, and arts center. This ‘suburban’ element was not originally intended in the original planning process. Regardless of how this area is critiqued, however, it has aided in both Charleston’s attractiveness and accomplishment in regard to sustainable urban renewal- at least according to my interviewees.
Various Other Plans and Definitions for Sustainable Urban Renewal

My interviewees went on to provide other examples of sustainable redevelopment in Charleston’s CBD, though their definitions were highly varied, lending credence to the idea that there is not one universal definition of what counts as sustainable urban renewal here. The varying definitions of urban greening and sustainability within the growth coalition are some of the reasons why sustainable redevelopment has not been stronger in Charleston. The CAA director was the first of my interviewees to suggest that the growth coalition is thinking about sustainable redevelopment in many different ways. He said:

I don’t think there is just one definition of green. I think what it is a lot of different things as I think green means reusing what we have, particularly our buildings, and property that we now have available. I think that the second piece is greening in ways to reduce the overflow issues that we have with our combined stormwater/sewage system. And this is no secret, ours are combined and ancient and we need to find ways to get that stormwater out of the sewers in rain events because of overflowing - we have raw sewage going right into the river. So any way for us to even put more green strategies to use in the city such as pervious pavement and those sorts of things will better the city as a whole. Then the last being actually encouraging more use of public transportation and eliminating vehicles – those are my three definitions of green and you have to have a little bit of all of them in the our downtown environment.
This definition of sustainable redevelopment was the most extensive and similar to my personal definition of what greening should be in a downtown environment.

However, the Head of Charleston’s Planning Department advocated during our interview that his office goes after smaller, less visible sustainability initiatives. He discussed his efforts to encourage using new technologies starting with the most practical “low-hanging fruit” such as LED lighting throughout the city’s infrastructure. Like my other interviewees, he also encouraged the promotion of urban sustainability and smart growth strategies through the reuse of already existing building space in the CBD. The head City Engineer gave me a more technical definition of sustainability, as he mentioned how Charleston’s CBD needs to start utilizing pervious pavement to reduce runoff pollution – especially as it is close to the river. Also, the updating of a city’s sewer systems was included in his vision of sustainable redevelopment in Charleston because sewer malfunctions lead to detrimental effects on the Kanawha River. He also mentioned how Charleston has recently updated most of its urban sewer drains with markers such as seen in Figure 12 below to reduce dumping of toxic substances that drain to the river.
Figure 12: An example of the markers that have recently been placed on drains in Charleston’s downtown area warning that what goes down the drains leads to the Kanawha River.

For the CURA Director, promoting downtown urban living is his priority for sustainable redevelopment in Charleston’s CBD. Accordingly, he was concerned about building residences and businesses in old downtown buildings with fewer materials. I also interviewed a CURA Board Member about sustainable urban redevelopment in the CBD. He also said that renovations of old buildings that “stick out like sore thumbs” can be done in order to save materials and bring about a new look to a historical side of the
city. The Mayor’s Office of Economic and Community Development Director had a similar definition of green in the urban context such as sticking to the R’s – Reusable and Recoverability while still being able to use existing elements – such as in the case of the Appalachian Power Park.

As a complement to living and working downtown, the KRT manager is interested in promoting sustainable fuels that cost the city less and make downtown more tolerable. He stressed the need for technologies such as natural gas or biodiesel to be used in the urban bus/transit fleets. The KRT currently has four operating biodiesel hybrid buses that actively promote the city’s use of sustainable technology as all these buses advertise that they are using this ‘clean’ technology. The KRT manager is concerned about the viability of clean fuels transit. He said city was only able to obtain the four buses from Federal Transportation Grants, as these hybrid buses cost around twice as much as what would be considered a regular bus. He went on to say that if the KRT spent the millions of dollars necessary to convert all the fleet to hybrid technology, it would take around 50 years to break even with current fuel prices. The KRT manager said simply that “Green is EXPENSIVE!”

Given the perceived expense of sustainable redevelopment, some of my interviewees were skeptical of green urban renewal. I interviewed a former Mayor of Charleston who served from 1971-1980. He indicated in our interview that sustainable planning was not a popular issue in Charleston or other West Virginia cities during his time in office. During his tenure he promoted the need and importance of having parks and park systems throughout the city. However, his overall tone in regard to sustainable
urban renewal was relatively pessimistic: “I have mixed thoughts about [sustainable] urban renewal as I think any person with any intellect should have questions regarding why it’s being used and how it works...” I think this a good quote that indicates the history of suspicions associated with sustainable urban renewal in Charleston, and how that legacy of uncertainty has limited a more aggressive pursuit of sustainable urban renewal projects by the growth coalition.

I interviewed the owner of Riggs Corporation that is a real-estate firm that leases a majority of downtown businesses their office space. He is a member of Charleston’s growth regime and when asked about sustainable redevelopment he said, “Personally, I don’t give a [explicative] about green, all I care about is money!” Even though I was shocked when I heard his reaction, his statement does a great job of summing up how businesses and certain industries are profit driven and pay little attention to sustainability initiatives they think will harm their bottom line. Despite his reaction, the Union Building, one of the buildings the Riggs Corporation owns was built in the 1940s on the banks of the Kanawha River and still uses the original HVAC system that takes river water to cool its generator – see Figure 13 below. So the interviewee subsequently said, “This building was green before green existed!”
Figure 13: A view of the Union Building from the Kanawha Riverbank. It is a building constructed in the 1940s that incorporated “green” technology at the time using river water to cool the HVAC systems.

Despite the pessimism toward sustainable planning by some of my interviewees, the City Manager assured me that green urban renewal is in Charleston’s future. He said that there is much support for open space with trees and grass in the CBD as well as the use of sustainable technologies for its infrastructure. The City Manager promotes the development of parks and nature trails that intersect with downtown to give people relief from the stresses of everyday urban life. He went on to promote these ideas to me as a part of what he feels are five major themes around which Charleston’s growth regime must focus. These are strong neighborhoods, up-to-date infrastructure, more recreation
events, enhanced business development, and efficient government. When these aspects of the city work together, he said, sustainable development will already be occurring.

Sustainable urban renewal, though new to Charleston, is shining much positive light on the city. Not only are the projects seen throughout Charleston promoting and boosting the city’s image but also that of the state and the regional Appalachian image. Smaller urban centers such as Charleston are proving how sustainability can be incorporated into the local landscapes of cities that have suffered the many negatives associated with the postindustrial transition. Charleston’s transition has been successful by connecting its sustainable urban renewal projects with the city’s past industrial image, while allowing room for new ideas and innovations to be incorporated into the renewal mix that are unique to the city and region.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis examined how urban renewal is carried out through shared governance strategies in the postindustrial city of Charleston, West Virginia. As Knuth (2006) suggests, sustainability is central to many forms of urban renewal today across a variety of urban contexts. I therefore wanted to understand how urban renewal in this city is negotiated through public/private partnership and how it is connected to what appears to be a sustainability shift common in many other cities across the U.S. As a part of my research I asked city administrators, development officials, and local business owners to describe renewal in downtown Charleston and to what extent they incorporated sustainability in to their plans. I feel as though I was able to obtain a better understanding of how the urban renewal and governance arenas in Charleston are connected to eco-friendly and sustainable practices through my conversations with these people. I was not able to talk everybody involved in the process, however. Instead I interviewed those working for or in the city whose positions were more directly related to sustainable urban renewal and not to the numerous city council members whose positions on the council are not full-time jobs related to or directly connected with economic or sustainable urban development.

Many of my interviewees answered my questions by stating that adding sustainability to redevelopment meant adding parks and trees to the downtown area. Others had more specific or detailed answers that urban greening was reusing infrastructure already in place such as historical preservation of buildings so materials are not wasted in building an entirely new structure. From the range of answers I received, it
is clear that there is no set definition of urban sustainability in Charleston. Their definitions of what counts as sustainable urban renewal need to be aligned with one another better to more effectively promote the sustainable implementation of urban renewal in the CBD.

Even though Charleston’s growth regime is starting to act on sustainable renewal, these varying definitions of sustainability hinder Charleston from becoming a leader in greener forms of renewal that might benefit not only the environment, but the business community, too. The differences of sustainability opinions expressed by my interviewees are not the only reason Charleston’s practice of sustainability and green initiatives are lacking in comparison to other cities outside of the Appalachian region. Charleston is an Appalachian city with strong historical ties to the energy industry that coincides with a legacy of coal extraction. Thus it appears there is some inherent resistance to green technologies based on political and economic realities in the region. Despite the city’s connection to ‘Big Energy’, my interviewees provided me with evidence that opinions are changing in Charleston, albeit slowly. The Jones Administration has been a city-wide leader in getting the local growth regime to consider sustainability in its urban renewal efforts. The projects through which he has promoted sustainability are large game changers, such as the Appalachian Power Park and the Haddad Riverfront Park revitalization that do much to promote Charleston’s image.

We must remember that Charleston is a city that started as a banking center for the extractive industries (salt, timber, coal and gas) that were occurring in the region. The postindustrial shift can be attributed to breaking some of these strong bonds between
downtown commerce and energy and allowing for more of a service (healthcare, education and law) oriented city. However, Charleston is a city so tightly connected to its past that when planning for a more sustainable future, they are incorporating the past in the renewal process—e.g. reusing the industrial warehouse buildings and train station for the ballpark and Capitol Markets and also shaping the Haddad Park waterfront canopy stage in the reflection of a sternwheeler boat. Sternwheelers can still actually be seen functioning in the Kanawha River as the coal is transported north and west out of the southern West Virginian coalfields that start just south and east of Charleston. Thus Charleston’s version of sustainable urban renewal is one that reflects its industrial past that promotes a history of relatively unsustainable energy production. It is an interesting contradiction, to say the least. However, I argue that this shift has only become possible relatively recently.

It is really only recently, particularly since the start of the current mayoral regime, that Charleston has started to capitalize on sustainable urban renewal projects rather than prioritizing commerce generation through more industrial and energy-led sectors of commerce. As the times have changed in Charleston so have the major goals of the city under this new administration. Though the connection to ‘Big Energy’ in Charleston will never be lost in the near future, the city is branching outside of the industries that have been most economically lucrative in the past (and also the most polluting). Now the city has the initiative or goal of becoming not the industrial or energy center of Appalachia, but is pushing to become the cultural, recreational and business capital of Appalachia—what my interviewees in the growth regime consider to be a much more sustainable and
eco-friendly city agenda. The growth regime largely believes sustainable urban renewal is a necessary strategy for future economic growth. This is because it helps increase attractiveness to consumers, and this attractiveness lures businesses and residents back to the city by proving that Charleston is a very healthy and vibrant place to work and live.

There are a number of strategies that are carried out by the growth regime in Charleston. They involve a mix of public and private actors and their respective reserves of funding. A business strategy that was analyzed for this research but has not yet been implemented in Charleston just yet is the idea of Business Improvement Districts. The BID concept has been explained and proposed for use to the City of Charleston Government and to the business community in the recent past (2010) by representatives from cities that have successfully used them in the State. Although Charleston has not yet decided to use the BID platform, those working in the city offices focused on economic development as well as local business owners are all leaning towards the thought that BIDs will very soon be seen in Charleston’s business community.

The laws are in place for BID development, and even though some sections of Charleston closely resemble what BIDs are, there are still no official BIDs functioning at the ground level. Because BIDs promote and add to the attractiveness of an area which in turn in most cases will increase the amount of business occurring in the specific area, BIDs are an innovative way of boosting not only a city’s modern image but also local businesses focused more so on local products/services rather than big industry or energy production that can have adverse affects on local environmental health. Thus BIDs potentially can function or represent a more sustainable way to do business in a
downtown area aiding in easing the transition from the manufacturing, energy and industrial image of the past to the more service oriented postindustrial image that has become presently visible in cities like Charleston. Capitol Market and the businesses along Summers Street exemplify many aspects of the BID model, including a focus on high-end, consumer products marketed in some cases as environmentally friendly. It remains to be seen if this BID-like model catches on, and whether or not it officially is deployed in Charleston’s CBD.

Perhaps the largest sustainably-oriented form of renewal in downtown Charleston is the Slack Plaza redevelopment project. This project demonstrates the nature of shared governance and complexity that goes into Charleston’s urban renewal projects. Slack Plaza reconstruction involves the mayor’s office, the planning commission, the CAA, funding from the U.S. EPA, and apparently now CURA. Of course it is worth mentioning here that shared governance in this instance and in the other examples I provide in Charleston has not included the general public to any substantial degree. Therefore the ‘shared’ aspect of governance in Charleston, like many other cities, is really only shared between a few key powerful actors that comprise the growth regime. This project also illustrates that sustainability-oriented projects are not deployed without some degree of controversy within the growth regime itself. To date no groundbreaking has occurred as regime stakeholders are concerned about what may happen with the park once all the money is spent to create what my interviewees consider to become one of the premier urban sustainable parks in the United States. Evidently some players in the growth regime feel that even though the park is to be redone for sustainability purposes as described by
the U.S. EPA, the grant does not take into account the problems associated with park loiterers. The loiterers told me that they still plan to congregate in the renovated park as they think the park is being redone for them. However, the CURA interviewee made clear to me that after redevelopment, these people are not welcome, though he acknowledged it will be extremely difficult to evict them from the new park. By and large, however, the other urban renewal projects I have mentioned in this research have gone forward without a hitch. It appears that this sort of redevelopment is gaining widespread support among the growth regime stakeholders.

My interviewees all told me that the business community and residents in the city of Charleston like and approve of Mayor Danny Jones and his efforts to sustainably renew the city. He has in fact been reelected into office twice, which I think demonstrates the community’s support for his policies and actions. His re-election combined with the projects that he has helped to support lend credence to the prospect that Charleston has begun to break free from its past. Yet the growth regime has accomplished this break by changing its image to that of a more modern city with elements seen within its urban renewal process that appear new-age but still reflect elements that connect with its past heritage.

Charleston has proven to its peer cities and national agencies like the U.S. EPA that it is a city worthy of- and willing to employ- higher levels of funding to change and renew itself for the betterment of the people and region. Through these public and private funds the city has been able to act as a leader in the realm of sustainable urban renewal among cities in the Appalachian region. Charleston has laid a solid infrastructure to do
so, but according to the head city engineer, continual work in upkeep must be done in order for the city to keep the advancement of sustainability heading in the right direction. Charleston’s head city engineer stated,

I think in the next 20 years Charleston is going to have to spend a lot of money to maintain what they have in the ground now. We have a combined sewer system that is over 100 years old and in some places going underneath buildings in the downtown area which could eventually lead to harming the natural environment around downtown.

Charleston may still be losing population but it has maintained a leadership role not only in the state of West Virginia serving as the capitol city but as an urban center for new forms of commerce within Central Appalachia. None of the sustainable renewal occurring in Charleston is likely original, but Charleston has plans for the future that will add uniqueness to the city’s already enhanced image as a leader in urban Appalachian sustainability. There are plans to connect the downtown river walkway and bike trails to parks that city dwellers go to outside the downtown area located along the Elk River, thus creating new river trails that will enable downtown to be more connected to its surrounding natural habitats. Also, plans are in the works to take an old, out-of-service Kanawha River train bridge that overlooks downtown and turn it into a walkway trestle covered with greenery. The trestle will improve the aesthetic look of downtown and will also aid in better connecting the neighborhoods directly across the river from the CBD to the downtown. Martin Riggs, the owner of the Riggs Corporation was quoted in saying in regards to the future of sustainable urban renewal in Charleston,
I think that Charleston is a pretty progressive city. Therefore, I think the city will continue to take the initiative (to become more sustainable). Also, most of our politicians are pretty practical too, and you have to be practical when it comes to urban sustainability simply because you can have all the sustainable initiatives in place that you want, but if you don’t have any industry or business, you are not going to have anything.

This final quote is an important concluding message to this thesis because it accurately frames the level of caution with which many of my interviewees in the urban growth regime use the concept of sustainability in their plans. It demonstrates that the sustainable cities movement is considered by many people to be important to the future of postindustrial cities like Charleston, but needs to be incorporated in ways that will enhance how cities are able to generate commerce and add to their local economies. After all, urban sustainability is not only defined by eco-friendly actions. Urban sustainability should also entail the reproduction or assurance of jobs, businesses and human capital that allow the city to flourish. So far Charleston has done a relatively decent job in carrying out this balance. The city seems to have a bright future not only as a city that will continue to find ways to promote sustainability with economic success, but also serving as an understudied and exemplary model of urban renewal in the Appalachia region.
REFERENCES


West Virginia State Code Chapter 8, Article 8-13 regarding Business Improvement Districts:

CHAPTER 8. MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS.
ARTICLE 13A. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS.

This article is known and may be cited as the "Business Improvement District Act."

§8-13A-2. Legislative findings and declaration of purpose.
The Legislature finds that many business districts within the municipalities of this state are economically depressed. This adversely affects the economic and general well-being of the citizens of those municipalities. Establishment of business improvement districts within municipalities of the state, in accordance with the purpose and powers set forth in this article, will serve a public purpose, promote the health, safety, prosperity, security and general welfare of all citizens in the state. It will also promote the vitality of commercial business areas within municipalities, while serving as an effective means for restoring and promoting commercial and other business activity within the business improvement districts created herein. This will be of special benefit to the property within the boundaries of any business improvement district created under this article and will stimulate economic growth and job creation.

The governing body of any municipality may, in accordance with the procedures and subject to the limitations set forth in this article, establish one or more business improvement districts within the municipality. The municipality may provide for the administration and financing of additional and extended services to businesses within the districts and for the administration and financing of a continuing program of services within the districts.

Any municipality which has established a business improvement district under this article may provide or cause to be provided such services as will restore or promote the economic vitality of the district and the general welfare of the municipality, including, but not limited to, the following:

(a) Beautification of the district, by means such as landscaping and construction and erection of fountains, shelters, benches, sculptures, signs, lighting, decorations and similar amenities;
(b) Provision of special or additional public services, such as sanitation, security for persons and property and the construction and maintenance of public facilities including sidewalks and other public areas;

(c) Making principal or interest payments on bonds issued by the municipality for public improvements located within and designated to improve the economic viability of the district;

(d) Providing financial support for public transportation and vehicle parking facilities open to the general public;

(e) Constructing, operating and maintaining parking facilities;

(f) Developing plans for the general architectural design of public areas and developing plans and programs for the future development of the district;

(g) Developing, promoting and supporting community events and activities open to the general public;

(h) Providing the administrative costs for a district management program; and

(i) Providing any other services which the municipality or district board is authorized to perform and which the municipality does not also perform to the same extent on a

Any municipality that has established a business improvement district shall establish a special business improvement district fund for each district created within such municipality. Revenue derived from any special assessment fees, gifts, grants, appropriations from the municipality or other sources shall be paid into the fund. Moneys in another municipal fund or funds may be advanced to the special fund only if reimbursement is made to such other fund or funds prior to the end of the fiscal year.