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I, Jeffrey A Weimer, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Community Planning in Community Planning.

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The Role of Marketing in Business Attraction for Neighborhood Business Districts: Case Study Research and Applied Findings.

Student's name: Jeffrey A Weimer

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Menelaos Triantafillou, MLA
The Role of Marketing in Business Attraction for Neighborhood Business Districts:
Case Study Research and Applied Findings.

Jeff Weimer

Senior Thesis
Professor Menelaos Triantafillou
Professor Jeanne Schroer
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Abstract

There are many different economic development strategies that are utilized in neighborhood business districts. Each of the approaches focuses on strategic methods for improving the aesthetic design, organization strength, promotional power, or economic viability as outlined in the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Program. Although these categories are registered trademarks of the program they are applicable in many other ways to revitalization projects in business districts. Often times these efforts are coordinated or involve one or several of the methods. In many cases the economic component is avoided or ignored. The literature on neighborhood business districts and redevelopment suggest that this is a valuable component to creating diverse, successful, and sustainable business districts. In addition marketing and promoting these economic strengths, incentives, and organizations are incredibly valuable. This study examines the value of business oriented marketing for neighborhood businesses districts through case study analysis of Paducah, Kentucky, Bellevue, Kentucky, the Strip District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Allston Village in Boston, Massachusetts, and Rookwood Commons in Norwood, Ohio. The findings from the case study and literature review are then applied to the Covington Renaissance District which is a local neighborhood business district which has struggled to find its identity in the local market. The inherent economic value of these business attraction marketing strategies is justified through analysis of the process, the measurement techniques, and applied case study.
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Introduction

There are many different economic development strategies that are utilized in neighborhood business districts. Each of the approaches focuses on strategic methods for improving the aesthetic design, organization strength, promotional power, or economic viability as outlined in the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Program. Although these categories are registered trademarks of the program they are applicable in many other ways to revitalization projects in business districts. Often times these efforts are coordinated or involve one or several of the methods. In many cases the economic component is avoided or ignored. The literature on neighborhood business districts and redevelopment suggest that this is a valuable component to creating diverse, successful, and sustainable business districts. One researcher suggests “You can renovate buildings, improve parking, and organize the coolest promotional events imaginable; but if the revitalization program’s staff and leaders don’t understand the districts economy and don’t know how to manipulate it effectively, all the building renovations and great promotional activities on earth won’t ensure commercial success” (Dono and Glisson 2009, pg. 69). In addition marketing and promoting these economic strengths, incentives, and organizations are incredibly valuable. The inherent economic value of these business attraction marketing strategies is justified through analysis of the process, the measurement techniques, and applied case study.

Problem Statement

There is inherent value in business oriented marketing tools which seek to promote and strengthen the existing and new businesses in neighborhood business districts. This is often undervalued in strategies for revitalization and organization. This
study will examine various organizational and marketing strategies undertaken by business districts and identify some common resources. The study will further apply these concepts to a local neighborhood business district which is undergoing revitalization efforts to help further analyze these tools.

**Context**

*Strategies*

There are many different ways which can utilize economic restructuring tools and analysis to help market business districts to businesses and developers. It is critical first to understand that “Retailing relates to every other function of the city. It stimulates and strengthens other businesses such as banking, accounting, publishing, or insurance. It provides a very broad job base” (Robertson, 1997, 1). This exemplifies the driving force behind this type of marketing undertaking which focuses on delivering the right mix of goods and services to a given community.

Some of the strategies which have been shown to be beneficial are trade area analysis which many organizations provide to potential businesses or entrepreneurs to help them understand the market capabilities of the district. It also helps to identify the existing mix of services and businesses which can be useful for relocation purposes. Additionally many groups and organizations have developed real estate and relocation services geared toward businesses looking to relocate or expand. These services are helpful in focusing interests and streamlining the location decision making processes.

In addition there are many tax and loan incentive programs that are marketed to businesses that are willing to relocate or rehabilitate buildings within these areas. This is perhaps one of the most widely used and successful components to business attraction
marketing strategies. It requires a great deal of coordination and collaboration between government entities, businesses, and organizations.

In addition, the literature suggests that there is a lot of value in promoting joint promotional or organizational strategies to incoming and existing businesses. Many businesses find collaborative networks in existing business districts appealing in terms of relocation. They can offer assistance and support to the new business by sharing resources, development, and marketing costs to help achieve a more successful outcome.

**Economic Implications**

Understanding and promoting a business model or environment is a critical component of this type of intervention. The process is primarily focused on truly understanding the market. This includes understanding the existing supply of businesses and types. It also means understanding the demand of the community as well. By identifying this market structure then most of the work comes at looking at the margins and gaps where there may be ways to positively manipulate the supply so that it can capture more of the demand from the community and area as a whole.

Sales gaps in particular are a major component of this analysis. It is important to be able to identify what a business district is currently offering versus what the market is demanding and is currently not being supplied. This area is where most of these programs find opportunities for growth and organization. Once these areas or niches are identified there are opportunities to build economic, organizational, promotional, and aesthetic designs around them.

In addition this type of intervention deals with the utilization of clustering to help improve the business environment. It is important that a business district builds a strong
and diverse base of business that collectively creates a consumer friendly shopping experience. There are many different types of clusters identified throughout the literature. These included complementary clusters which serve as a mix which each complement each other and provide a larger and more diverse offering of goods and services. In addition many resources suggest the power of competitive clusters which have services selling similar specialty goods and services such as antique shops or bakeries, benefitting by collectively organizing in one area.

This type effort also deals with a working and operational understanding of cost and benefit. Since there is a great deal of quantifiable benefits that are resultant from these studies it is easy to utilize cost-benefit analysis to understand the impact of such investments on a community. Many of the projects, particularly those which are jointly undertaking require large amounts of capital up front and a vision and understanding of identifying and quantifying all of the potential impacts to the district and community as a whole are critical to the viability and sustainability of this type of market intervention.

Measurement

There are multiple methods or factors that can be utilized to quantify the benefits of these marketing strategies. Although they cannot be solely isolated to these efforts, in most cases the results can show that there is increased value in strategies which place more emphasis on this structural and economic base. The National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Center has provided much of the research and information on how to measure these effects. They have set standard tools for how they have measured the success of their individual programs and their national effectiveness as a whole.
These measurement means provide quantifiable evidence of usefulness and effectiveness of these tools.

One means of measurement that is discussed in the literature is studying the employment trends. Growth in jobs and decreased unemployment suggest that these efforts are helping to either attract new businesses or expand and improve existing ones. Job growth and unemployment are easily found figures for business districts and their surrounding employment base. The only drawback with this type of method is that it examines the effects of the policy or program in the defined business district or employment base. It does not fully analyze what this type of growth does to other areas of cities or surrounding municipalities from which businesses or people may have come from. In this sense although there are many benefits for the municipality, there may be many negative externalities in competitive or comparable communities.

Another more definable way to examine the effects of these marketing programs is to look at the increases in the numbers of businesses. This would be a valuable tool in isolating the effects to the specific community. Although it still is difficult to attribute the results to this economic marketing strategy, the benefit still implies that there has been some type of structuring and marketing for businesses that have improved the economic environment.

An additional means of measurement is tracking the changes in built environment. For instance new construction and development can be categorized and monetized to show the added value of physical and economic development in the business district. In addition renovation of existing or historic building stock can be recorded and monetized as well. Utilizing these physical developments for measurement of the influence of
business incentives would only be relevant if you are examining private economic investment and not the governmental investment in physical or aesthetic infrastructure on the street.

In unison with this physical development are the changes in value of the land and buildings in the business districts. The resulting shifts in the value are representative of economic change in the business model or structure of the community. By marketing for attraction of new businesses and improving existing businesses the costs and value of locating in the district increase. This can be said to be a positive result of the business oriented marketing strategy in the district.

**Benefits**

There are many different benefits and positive externalities which come from this type of market intervention. Literature shows that there are many benefits gained from this type of business oriented analysis and marketing strategies. The first and foremost of these is job and business creation in the district. There is a noticeable correlation with business and economic marketing strategies that understand and can manipulate the existing market and business climate in the district.

These interventions also inherently have the ability to improve the overall economic health and sustainability of communities by helping to strategically focus and organize efforts in their central districts. These tools have many positive externalities on surrounding communities and cities as well such as increased and improved tax base, improved image and marketability. Well structured, designed, and functioning businesses districts help attract new residents and consumers to surrounding neighborhoods and
areas. These types of investments are known to have this positive relationship with the residential bases that they serve.

In addition to the visible and equitable benefits to this strategic economic organization and marketing there are more structural benefits that enhance their viability and sustainability. There must be some level of collaboration with all types of revitalization tools including organization, planning, design, and consumer and customer marketing and promotions. In order to successfully implement and carry out these business attraction strategies these other tools must be accounted for and planned with in coordination. Conversely successful economic structuring and marketing is immensely valuable to other strategies as it provides the basic analytic framework of understanding the market and the consumers. It really helps reduce the process to simple terms of understanding the existing supply versus demand and knowing where and how to make improvements accordingly.

As evidence of this investment on a larger scale we can look at the national statistics of the Main Street Program. Established in 1980, they have now been in operation for over 31 years and have seen great success as a result of the market driven and economically oriented strategies. The group has leveraged over $48.8 billion dollars of reinvestment into struggling communities nationwide. Their approach is heavily reliant on economic restructuring and marketing, has created over 391,050 jobs. This fact alone shows the strength in this type of tool as well as the larger program structure. In addition their success can be measured by the 206,600 buildings that have been renovated for businesses as a result of this economic organizing and structure.
Limitations

One of the biggest limitations to valuing the benefit of this tool is the inability to distinguish the business marketing tool with other efforts. Improvement projects in neighborhood business districts often are multi-pronged approaches which require many different projects and tools to work in coordination. Although this could arguably be a benefit or positive externality of this specific tool it prohibits the ability to independently gauge the effects of this intervention. This would be easier to study if there were more independent efforts that solely focused on business oriented marketing but as a component of much broader and complex its value is more beneficial.

As a result of this inability to isolate the variable and benefits there is not a large amount of literature focusing on the topic. Most of the resources examined were published by the Main Street Center. These articles and books along with the various other sources tend to have a much broader and expansive focus. The lack of resources and research that focus on these strategies independently further prohibits the ability to fully justify the economic impacts of the business marketing projects.

Literature Review

Introduction

The revitalization of neighborhood business districts (NBD) or “Main Streets” have been the subject of many studies and analysis. There have been evolving strategies and theories on how to best support and implement these plans in districts. The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Program has been a driving force in understanding how to successfully address declining or struggling neighborhood business
districts and downtowns. They have been a leading authority in producing literature that utilizes studies and real applications to explain the various focus and methods and in particular the promotional component. Their identified strategies and suggestions are further backed and supported by other resources that discuss the role of marketing in neighborhoods. These resources show and define the large spectrum of promotional and marketing tools that can be used when trying to revive and improve existing or struggling business districts.

_Literature Synthesis_

_Context and Background_

The literature helps explain the historical foundation and development of business district revitalization. These types of planning efforts have been in existence since the 1970’s when the true effects of disinvestment and abandonment began to plague inner city neighborhood business districts. This is a result of a large number of residents and businesses relocating to suburban communities. This led to the need to adapt and change the neighborhood business districts to the shifting demographic changes as well as consumer demands.

Attempts at revitalization began with the simple aesthetic improvements which were thought to enhance districts appeal and economic capabilities. The idea which still holds true today is that if you provide clean, attractive, safe, and well designed spaces the visual character and feeling of the place acts as a built in marketing tool (Project for Public Spaces 2000, 18, Bloom and Webb 2009, Smyth 1994 Bostwick 2009, ). Aesthetic improvements although they addressed significant factors or issues in districts were not
wholly successful and did not really start to see results until they were paired with other revitalization strategies.

Economic restructuring was the next method or step adopted in the revitalization process. This involved examining and working with the tenant mixes in these NBDS. Understanding and developing strong commercial and retail mixes is a major role in defining and developing strong districts. “Retailing has a life and vigor night and day, seven days a week. It has universal appeal. Everyone shops – executives, workers, students, tourists. Retailing relates to every other function of the city. It stimulates and strengthens other businesses such as banking, accounting, publishing, or insurance. It provides a very broad job base” (Robertson, 1997, 1). Establishing and promoting the right business mix is important as it enables NBD’s to distinguish themselves and have a more unique and promotable product (Bloom and Webb 2009, 73). This alone still did not have the profound expected impact and further development of their technique and strategies was needed.

In order to better carry out the planning design and management of space organizational work needed to accompany these components. This was developed so that there would be an entity to implement the designs and economic restructuring plans. These established groups would be in charge of the day to day management and eventually marketing and promotions of the district. This organizational entity eventually led to the role of marketing and promoting the created or revitalized business districts. (Bloom and Webb 2009, Bostwick 2009, Lopilato 2003, Smyth 1994).

Marketing and promotions are the most recent conception and component of NBD revitalization strategies. They support the three earlier strategic components. These
components are identified in the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program as their four point approach. It is one of the most critical and continual roles involved in the day to day operations of a revitalization project. One resource describes this relationship noting, “Creating a place depends more on effective management than it does design and requires the involvement of many different disciplines because of the extremely complex issues that need to be addressed” (Project for Public Spaces 2000, 39). These specific strategized are identified throughout most of the materials at varying degrees and levels, showing that there is a diverse range tools and techniques that can be utilized the marketing of NBDs.

Definitions

The literature describes Main Streets as economic, social, and cultural centers within communities and neighborhoods. (Bloom and Webb 2009, Feehan and Feit 2006, Lopilato 2003, Glisson, Smith, and West 1997). One author, Doug Loescher, describes this importance noting, “They are the economic engine, the big stage, the community’s living room. Main Streets tell us about who we are and who we were, and how the past has shaped us” (Bloom and Webb 2009, 7). For the purposes of this literature review, the terms neighborhood business district and Main Street will be used to describe older central commercial areas in neighborhoods and cities. Although some resources address main streets interchangeably with downtowns, the basis of this discussion focuses on physically and organizationally smaller districts. The literature helps explain the complex factors that are critical to the survival and betterment of these areas.

The majority of literature describes Marketing and Promotions as the advertising and selling of place. This involves a large variety of tools including mass media, aesthetic
and business marketing, and event promotions. This continual management and organizational aspect of this type of planning is noted as one of most critical components to the success of revitalization and planning projects. One resource discusses this idea in terms of the provision of public space noting “80% of the success of any public space can usually be attributed to its management. No matter how good the design of a space is, it will never become a true place unless it is well managed” (Project for Public Spaces 2000, 75). In terms of this report, marketing and promotions refer to media, graphic, business, event and aesthetic tools as discussed before.

_Literature_

Marketing and promotions can have a profound impact on the revitalization of business districts. The National Trusts Main Street Center asserts this importance noting, “Promotion influences attitudes toward the commercial district and can alter consumer habits” (Bloom and Webb 2009, 195). This is also part of the four point approach by the Main Street. The research suggests that marketing of assets and events play a major role in branding as well as attracting businesses and patrons to neighborhood business districts. Promotions of physical and business developments in the districts can also positively impact the viability and interest in the area (Bloom and Webb 2009, Feehan and Feit 2006, Glisson, Smith, and West 1997, Smyth 1994).

The literature identifies the role of media as a large component arm of marketing business districts not only to potential customers but to possible businesses and tenants. Print media such as newspapers and other local periodicals can be utilized to build interest in the district. This coverage can also include advertisement and involvement in special events and promotions. They can also be utilized to promote the redevelopment
and revitalization projects that are going on in the district. By promoting the construction and investment factors of the project they can help build interest. Multimedia sources such as television and radio can also help promote these areas through event coverage as well as business advertising. (Bloom and Webb 2009, 198).

Web based marketing and promotions can be critical in an era where small town business districts have to compete with larger national retailers and power centers. Connecting the districts name and identity to the internet helps to grab a larger potential audience. Districts can make it as simple as possible for potential businesses and customers who would like to check out the offerings of the NBD before they come to visit. This can include a comprehensive website that shows how to get to and around the area, with a directory of stores, restaurants, parking facilities, attractions and their hours. These types or resources can also provide event calendars and updates and can serve as posting boards for community happenings and events. They can also serve as a recruitment vehicle for new businesses and residents if they provide relocation services such as listing available housing or apartments. Many of these web based efforts also provide a basic conception and report of the business district and the trade areas surrounding them. These are useful for attracting and retaining new and existing businesses (Bloom and Webb 2009).

Another major component of marketing which is discussed in the literature is marketing through the planning and organization of events. Programming districts and spaces to create centers of activity can have a profound impact on the image and perception of a district. Getting people to come to special events begins to introduce new customers the district. The activity also helps to create the image of a safer more exciting
environment for which many people would like to return to. Special events can also create foot traffic for existing retailers and businesses. This can help the businesses further by utilizing events as promotional tools for their stores. (Bloom and Webb 2009, McClinchy 2008, Feehan and Feit 2006, Glisson, Smith, and West 1997, Smyth 1994)

A graphic and visual identity is important to creating an image for a business district. By creating a cohesive and attractive logo and branding theme, there can be a unifying element in the district that helps create a more neighborly and collaborative environment. Graphic identities can also be established to help unify elements such as street and wayfinding signs to make the experience easier and more stress and hassle free for the visitors and residents. (Bloom and Webb 2009, Bostwick 2009).

Another area that the literature discusses is business promotions and marketing increasing the sales and foot traffic for the individual tenants. By promoting and supporting these businesses they are not only supporting the economy of the district they are also helping to strengthen their brand and marketing identity. The business type and base can serve as a foundation for establishing the identity of the district. (Bloom and Webb 2009, Warnaby 2004).

Also joint promotional techniques and strategies are discussed in several of the text as valuable marketing tools that help create a stronger and more collaborative business base. It also helps to spread the word for smaller businesses which may not have been able to advertise without sharing the costs with other businesses or organizations. Joint promotions serve as a strong foundation for packaging and marketing the district as a whole, rather than the piecemeal offerings and amenities. Also joint promotional efforts
Advertising through experience and visual appearance offers the opportunity to have a built in marketing component that is tied to the character and feeling of a NBD. One source discusses the profound impact of creating good visual impressions on people and potential customers. “Perceptions about safety and cleanliness, the scale of adjacent buildings, and a place’s character or charm are often foremost in people’s minds in deciding whether to use a place (Project for Public Spaces 2000, 18). These visual components have a strong role in the identification of character for which promotional and marketing campaigns can be built upon.

The physical appearance and design of neighborhood business districts have a major role in the performance of NBD’s. The visual components of the neighborhood can add a great deal of interest in these neighborhoods. One study further suggests “The quality of the public environment can make the pedestrian experience memorable, creating a positive image, a sense of community pride, a desire to linger, and a desire to return” (Feehan and Feit 2006, 172). Public infrastructure such as sidewalks and open space can influence the visual character and context of districts. From a design standpoint there are usually many improvements that can improve the appearance and functionality of the district and individual buildings. One resource suggests how to begin this improvement process noting “Revitalization often requires many small improvements to signal to the public that things are happening and to inspire others to join the transformation. So with an eye on the big picture, your organization must start small, knowing that more dramatic design improvement will usually follow” (Bloom and Webb
Additionally the architectural character of these districts can attract businesses and residents. Research and practice conclude that design is an important factor in improving and developing main street business districts (Bloom and Webb 2009, Lopilato 2003, Smyth 1994).

There is a series of measurement tools that can be used to begin to quantify the benefits of these promotional campaigns on revitalization projects. Some of the measures include attendance, sales, and surveys (Bloom and Webb 2009, 207). Examining these few things can help to better understand the frequency for which people are using or supporting the district. These tools seem like plausible measurements but their validity has not been tested and applied to the mentioned case studies throughout the literature.

Key Issues & Themes

Coordination and Dependency

From the literature it is evident that marketing and promotions is only one component of much larger revitalization and development plans. Although it seems to be the linking foundation that supports all of the components, it is important to recognize and address the fact that there are many independent variables that can influence and change the success of a project.

Place Marketing vs. Branding

The marketing of place is much more engaged and involved on with understanding and capitalizing on the existing social and physical characteristics of the site. Branding as it is identified can be a more generic method of characterizing and promoting a space and place. This can in some case create disconnection between the customers and the place if they are left out of the process. One research noted, “Cities
can't be branded into submission, though. For better or worse, they evolve at the street level, and master plans or logos” (Bostwick 2009, 26)

**Originality & Authenticity**

One point of debate and contention with neighborhood revitalization and in particular the marketing is the originality and authenticity of the product as well as marketing campaigns. Unique business Districts should be promoted as such so that they maintain their originality. (Patteeuw 2002, 50). A common concern is that marketing campaigns take too generic of an approach to defining and programming space. It is critical that the context, history, and social atmosphere of these NBDs are utilized and capitalized in the marketing programs both to users and potential business owners. (Bloom and Webb 2009, 196).

**Event Organization**

The organization of events is a very important and reoccurring theme throughout the literature. There are great opportunities to rebuild a client base and attract visitors using special event marketing. These events can be based off of the local traditions of the neighborhood such as cultural heritage festivals. They can also be based on the retail and business base in the district. Establishing signature events goes a long way in terms of creating a solid and unique branding identity for the district.

**Web Based Media**

The newer literature clearly reveals the importance of better connecting business districts to the web in terms or promotions and organization. With growing use of the internet to conduct business and reach larger audiences it provides a great platform to provide comprehensive and useful information and services to interested people. There is
also a great deal of social media networking sites that can be utilized to further promote these districts. Additionally, although there is little research and literature on this area, social media blogging sites have become vehicles for the promotion of cities and neighborhoods. Many are built to highlight new and exciting events and developments and can help publicize the efforts and offerings of the business district.

Data

The literature closely follows case and scenario based descriptions and evaluations. The research has been completed by governmental and academic agencies and research groups. There is also a lot of data and literature that is drawn from urban theorist and researchers who study the impacts of these programs, most of these have been observationally based as well.

The literature also provides many additional case studies that can be further examined and studied to begin to quantify the results. Most of these, as mentioned before, are in more narrative and descriptive forms. They would need to be further cross referenced with general data that may be provided by governing or organizational bodies that are in charge of NBD revitalization programs.

Conclusion

There is a great deal of literature written regarding business district, in specific marketing and promoting the neighborhood aesthetics, business offerings, events, and unique character. The various sources utilize case studies to help explain the implementation of these strategies and some like Bloom and Webb go as far as identifying measurement tools that help analyze and quantify the success of these programs in the districts.
The literature reveals that marketing campaigns and programs undertaken by business districts are generally very positive and successful. This success is described in terms of a close symbiotic relationship between all components of revitalization projects. Marketing does seem to be the connective and supportive thread between the projects, which further establishes its importance to these projects.

Although through literature, we know of ways for which we can begin to quantify the success of place based neighborhood marketing programs, there is little supporting research which has actually calculated these effects. It would be useful in terms of the study to use some of these evaluative tools in application with several case studies to better and further understand the impacts of these programs.

**Methodology**

The project utilizes five case studies to determine the key elements and components to business attraction marketing strategies. The selected case studies are that of Allston Village in the city of Boston, Downtown Paducah, Kentucky, Bellevue, Kentucky, Rookwood Commons, and the Strip District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These projects were chosen on the basis of their applicability to the successful marking and promotional strategies for business promotion. Several of them were also chosen because of their ability to utilize these marketing strategies to catalyze redevelopment and revitalization efforts in their respective areas. The methodologies and strategies behind each of these marketing and promotional programs helped establish the key principles that are essential to creating effective, innovative, and integrated marketing strategies that help draw in new businesses and patrons from the neighborhood, city, and region.
Allston Village as a case study was chosen because of its successful strategy of organizing and promoting itself as a multicultural dining district. Their organizing and marketing efforts as a district have attracted and retained an eclectic mix of restaurants which has helped improve the viability and marketing capability of the project. This provides an example of an organizational and structuring strategy.

Downtown Paducah Kentucky has successfully been able to brand and market itself to businesses and customers as an eclectic and thriving arts district. Again they were chosen as they have been able to organize and structure their marketing efforts around the attraction of the arts industry.

Bellevue, Kentucky was chosen as a local example that has seen success in branding, marketing, and revitalizing their business district. This example was provided by recommendation of my thesis committee to provide local precedent for this study. This organization provides an example of organizational structure as well as a mixed approach to branding which attracts and retains specific businesses in order to further the success and marketability of the district.

The analysis of these case studies is based on the business marketing literature that is discussed in the literature review. The majority of this literature has come from the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Center as they have been the primary organization who studies and writes on this topic. Other sources include Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) who has approached and developed research on the topic. Their research predominantly focuses on attraction strategies utilized in struggling or low income neighborhoods. There are additionally several different literature sources that help inform the analysis of the case studies. In general
characteristics we are examining are media based marketing strategies, organizational structure of overseeing organizations, and the components of each of the strategies which help determine the success of business attraction measures.

The Strip District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania provides another example of successful marketing strategies that have helped attract new businesses. Their organization has created tools for outreach and marketing to potential businesses through market and trade area studies. They have utilized this to prove the strength of the available market for the area. Additionally, they have created a successful marketing brand for their community district which is valuable to this analysis.

The Rookwood Commons case study helps to introduce the marketing strategies employed by private entities for business attraction. The structure and capabilities of this precedent help show the differences in structure between neighborhood business districts and private commercial developments such as strip centers and malls. The key differences in strategy and organization can inform the analysis of the other case studies. It may also produce some additional ideas or suggestions which will help in generating recommendations for the Covington Renaissance District.

The key elements gained from each of the case studies are applied to Renaissance Covington area. This area was selected for further analysis as they have a Main Street oriented revitalization organization and approaches established and are currently working on strengthening and improving the business district. The district and program are analyzed with the identified framework established in the case study analysis and literature review. This includes examining existing efforts, plans, and programs in the Renaissance Covington area. Additionally, this analysis examines existing conditions and
assets of the neighborhood such as business composition, neighborhood organizations, aesthetics, and historical character.

This analysis developed from the application of principles is synthesized by creating broad based recommendations for creating innovative and effective marketing plans for NBD’s. Recommendations are also created regarding the improvement of marketing and promotional strategies for the Renaissance Area in downtown Covington. More specifically this methodology addresses how the program can utilize existing neighborhood assets and organization to further their mission.

**Sources of Data**

The data used in this project includes market and neighborhood based case studies. The identified marketing programs will specifically be examined through identifying their key strategies and focuses. The outcomes of the revitalization place based marketing programs are important to this analysis to help better predict the importance or influence of specific policies.

In general the scope of the data is limited to neighborhood based commercial districts in historic inner city neighborhoods. This helps define the body of research. The case studies in particular are those developed using the Main Street Programs approach to revitalization promotion. This provides a strong foundation of literature and information as a resource and their general approach is comparable to many other revitalization strategies that are employed. This will limit the scope to neighborhood based integrative marketing and promotional strategies that are not reliant on large scale single site redevelopment and planning projects.
The selected case studies will be examined using Main Street Program data and literature in correlation with additional city and local literature data for the specified areas. In both Pittsburgh and Boston there are citywide Main Street Entities that produce literature and control some of the larger initiatives and strategies that are implemented on the local levels. In Paducah the city is part of the same Renaissance on Main program as Covington which is part of the Commonwealths Department for Local Governments. Additionally the local precedent of Bellevue, Kentucky has information provided through the city and their main street entity. Additionally the analysis of Rookwood Commons utilizes developer and commercial data along with additional literature to help compare the approaches for business attraction marketing strategies.

With a similar Main Street oriented program in place in the Renaissance District in Kentucky, some direct comparisons and conclusions can be drawn using their program data and promotional strategies. This data is available with both the Main Street Center, the local Main Street Corporation, and through the Cities.

The project utilizes the five case studies to determine the key elements and components to the Main Street Programs Place Based marketing strategies. The selected case studies are that of Allston Village in the city of Boston, Downtown Paducah, Kentucky, Bellevue Kentucky, and the Design Zone in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These projects were specifically focused on because of their applicability to the Main Street Program and successful marking and promotional strategies that helped catalyze revitalization in their respective neighborhoods. The methodologies and strategies behind each of these marketing and promotional programs will help to establish the key principles that are essential to creating effective, innovative, and integrated marketing
strategies that help draw in new businesses and patrons from the neighborhood, city, and region.

The key elements gained from each of the case studies are applied to Renaissance Covington area. This area was selected for further analysis as they have a Main Street oriented revitalization organization and approach established and is currently working on strengthening and improving the business district. The district and program will be analyzed with the identified framework established in the case study analysis and literature review. This includes examining existing efforts, plans, and programs in the Renaissance Covington area. Additionally this analysis will look at the existing condition and assets of the neighborhood such as business composition, neighborhood organizations, aesthetics, and historical character.

This analysis is synthesized by creating some broad based recommendations for creating innovative and effective marketing plans for NBD’s. Recommendations are made regarding the improvement of marketing and promotional strategies for the Renaissance Area in downtown Covington. More specifically this will address how the program can utilize existing neighborhood assets or conditions to further their mission.

**Case Study Analysis**

*Paducah, Kentucky*

A good way to help put this analysis into context is to examine a program which has successfully utilized business attraction marketing tools. The city of Paducah, Kentucky is a prime example of a successful economic transformation of a community. The downtown and riverside areas in the community decided to form a main street
Weimer, 31

organization in 1985 to help reverse years of decline and disinvestment in the community. As part of this they adopted the main street four point approach which generalizes the four categories as discussed earlier, organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotions.

Paducah, Kentucky is located in southwestern Kentucky along the Ohio, River. It is a smaller city with a population of roughly 26,000 people. The renaissance area encompasses a large amount of downtown Paducah including historic downtown, and the Lowertown Arts, District. The district is located just off of the Ohio River and incorporates a large area of primarily commercial buildings. The image below shows a map of the district.

A major component of their revitalization strategy was the economic restructuring component which sought to leverage a great deal of reinvestment through attracting and marketing to outside businesses, entrepreneurs, and residents. The organization’s website describes the great economic impact that this portion has noting, “Economic Restructuring strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. PRA helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs” (http://www.paducahalliance.org/about, 2011). As a result of this investment in the structuring and diversification of business they have seen dramatic results and have been recognized nationally for their program and organization.

Their approach in particular sought to attract creative and artistic ventures and entrepreneurs to help revitalize and fill the space in the designated area. This was done through a series of economic incentives that were marketed to outside businesses and entrepreneurs. In addition they incentivized housing and workspaces to artists through relocation assistance to help economically diversify and stabilize the area. This marketing approach includes a real estate service which helps interested parties locate available retail space for purchase or rent. This type of marketing is found in many other successful cases and is an example of how marketing can help influence the location decision processes.

As a city of 26,275 they have seen dramatic benefits from their investments in marketing for business attraction. Since inception the area has seen an increase in jobs of 1000 showing that there has been substantial economic growth as a result of their
investment. In addition 234 new businesses have opened up in the district providing direct and visible benefits to the community as a result of this marketing and organization. In addition the district has seen 119 renovations and restorations of existing historic buildings. There have been 27 new building and construction projects that have taken place as a result of this project. Another true and quantifiable result is the change in vacancy rates for the main street district in Paducah. Before implementation there was a 70% vacancy rate and currently this rate is right around 14%.(http://www.paducahalliance.org/about, 2011)

One downside of this study along with most other analysis is the lack of focus on the effects to the larger region or competitive areas. This organization shows the positive economic gains and benefits that come from the program but it does not address or analyze the larger impact to surrounding neighborhoods or communities. The growth and success for this area may detrimentally impact another by stealing businesses or residents. This type of analysis would be useful if interested in understanding the larger impacts to the city and region.

Allston Village, Boston, Massachusetts

Allston Village in Boston, Massachusetts provides another example of a business oriented marketing strategy that helped create a successful and positive impact on the community. The program was established in 1996 and follows the four step process laid out by the national trust. This area was culturally diverse to begin with so their business marketing strategy focused on improving and expanding upon this mix. In particular some of their goals include improvement of storefronts, promoting the district, collaboration, safety, and aesthetics.
Allston Village is located in the neighborhood of Allston which is adjacent to the Cambridge River and is close proximity to Boston University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard University. The district is centered along historic commercial districts on Brighton and Harvard Avenues. The image below is of an interactive map that is used to identify neighborhood and district establishments. The program has undoubtedly benefited from its location in between major educational and cultural institutions in an historic urban environment.

Map 2: Allston Village Map (Source: http://www.bu.edu/today/node/7265/)

The district has branded itself as an international dining and shopping experience. They have honed their marketing for businesses and customers to focus on culturally
diverse and international businesses. This strategy so far has worked for them in attracting and retaining businesses. It has also helped these businesses package their district as a destination for customers.

A key to this revitalization effort is in the structuring district economics to help strengthen and improve the business mix. They describe the business oriented elements in this program noting “The Economic Restructuring Committee activities include distributing welcome packets to new Allston Village businesses, providing technical assistance where necessary, and helping property owners recruit appropriate tenants and new businesses find appropriate sites and assistance. The committee also maintains a local job-posting web page, and a local commercial space web page” (allstonvillage.com). The economic structuring there focuses on reaching out to potential new businesses as well as strengthening existing through organization and promotion. This organization within the businesses and collaborative efforts in drawing in new businesses is imperative to the commercial success of the district. In order to have a holistic and attractive product to market to consumers there must be well organized and defined product to market in the first place.

This case study displays the strength in creating a collective vision and identity. It also shows that joint promotional and organizational efforts that make opening up and expanding businesses in the district are very useful in terms of improving the market offerings and catering to the local demands. It also shows the success found in establishing a niche market within a larger city and neighborhood area. Since Allston Village is one of many business and commercial districts in the City of Boston it was very beneficial to find a unique identity that could make the district unique in the market.
The Strip District, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Strip District, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is part of a citywide national trust main street program which was developed from early revitalization efforts in individual business districts and communities. The community had developed an organization called the Neighbors in the Strip with a goal of "promote economic development opportunities, while preserving the personality, integrity and character of the Strip" (www.neighborsinthestrip.com). This group has over time adopted the main street four point approach and has arguably over time been successful in the intervention efforts.

This borders downtown Pittsburgh to the northeast. The district is also bordered to the north by the Alleghany River. The district focuses on corridors including Railroad, Smallman, Penn Avenue, and Liberty Avenue from 11th to 33rd streets. The figures below show the boundaries and location of the district. These factors made this area ideal for factory and industrial and warehousing growth in the early development and expansion of the city. These warehousing and commercial character of this neighborhood as continued on with various restaurants and grocery type stores located in the area currently.
This historic character has been utilized in planning efforts to create and organize a successful and vibrant commercial community. Much of this success is attributed to the strong implementation and organization around the Main Street approach. They have developed a strong structural organization including business owners and stakeholders and have collaborated with the city as well as development organizations. A major
A component of their approach focuses on business attraction and job creation within the district. Through their data and organization it is evident that there has been a great deal of research regarding understanding the market of the surrounding neighborhoods, communities, and region. They have done a market analysis in their initial organizational steps and have been successful at positioning themselves to meet the needs or fill the gaps of the given market. These studies were then used as promotional tools for reaching out to potential businesses and investors.

In addition the organization has been able to successfully brand and publish these components in coordination with their customer based web based marketing techniques. They have created attractive and accessible one stop resources for understanding the offerings of the neighborhood businesses, events, and contact information. Additionally they have published annual reports and pamphlets to document the growth and success of this organization showing new businesses, collaborations, events, and future opportunities. This helps to clearly promote the positive business environment in the community for potential investors and businesses.

One particular example of this is the published market data. The organization hired Randy Strothman & Associates as a consultant to create a market analysis and summary that could be used as a promotional material for potential businesses. This analysis included understanding the framework of the surrounding community in city. It included identifying gaps or trends in retail which could be met with development or business in the Strip District. The study also examined the types of products and services that people were buying in order to find the strengths and gaps within the current market. It also examined and laid out steps or concepts for marketing strategies for individual
businesses. This document provides the tools and data analysis for the existing and future business communities to strengthen and expand their business plans therefore improving the district. The organization also created a real estate resource for new investors and businesses that help make locating available properties for purchase or lease within the district. This service is a reoccurring theme in the other case studies.

Additionally we can see that these marketing based programs are born from the strong organization and design work in the beginning of the process. This shows that although the promotional tools have a great value their strength and value is very dependent on a combination of other factors. The organization of a group really can define the quality and implementation of promotional projects and will ultimately affect their ability to actively and successfully attract and retain businesses.

These efforts have ultimately led to some commercial and developmental successes in the community. They have seen additional businesses and jobs growing in the community and have also stabilized and strengthened the existing businesses and residential offerings. They describe these successes noting “From fundraising and development of a Neighborhood Improvement Plan to a reduction in crime of 14%, 10% and 9.2% in, 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively, to assistance in bringing nearly 50 new businesses and approximately 700 jobs to the area over the past four years, Neighbors in the Strip has been intricately involved effecting positive changes for Strip District residents, businesses, property owners, visitors and the Pittsburgh region” (http://www.neighborsinthestrip.com). The growth and improvement of the district has also resulted in related changes in the safety and aesthetics of the community. It has also helped strengthen their brand and market identity within the city and region.
The City of Bellevue, Kentucky also provides another example of a successful transformation of a business district where business oriented marketing has helped the community. As a small city of 6480 people, Bellevue has small business district that runs along Fairfield Avenue. This renaissance district was established in 2003 as joint effort of the City of Bellevue, the National Trust for Historic Preservations’ Main Street Center, the Kentucky Heritage Council, and the Kentucky Renaissance on Main Program. They have adopted the general main street four point approach. The organization describes the purpose noting “This would include targeting vacant and dilapidated structures for redevelopment, building and improving streetscape, targeting retail businesses / retail service recruitment, and the promotion of the downtown area” (shopbellevueky.com). This exemplify for the elements of the trusts four points approach with particular emphasis on promotion and recruitment of business and retail.

Particularly the there is a lot of work done on the economic restructuring for the district. They note the benefit of this component, “By helping existing downtown businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today’s market, Main Street Programs help convert unused space into productive property and sharpen the competitiveness of business enterprises” (shopbellevueky.com). This goal is evident in their usage of web based marketing media that clearly markets and identifies the small town, antique, and artistic character which it is promoting. The organization acts as a resource that collectively provides access and information to the various shopping, lodging, service, and dining experiences. Additionally the group serves as a real estate
tool that promotes available properties and commercial spaces available within the community. This is an extremely valuable resource for recruiting new businesses. In conjunction with the advertisement and description of the existing business community these are valuable resources for attracting and retaining businesses. This also, along with the other case studies demonstrates the power of web based marketing efforts in reaching potential business owners and developers.

*Rookwood Commons, Norwood, Ohio*

An additional strategy of marketing comes in the form of larger development corporations which have a more holistic and market driven approach for promoting their neighborhoods. These strategies have the benefit of having a more singular and organized structure due to ownership of many properties or parcels. These groups in general can control the development process and thus the image that is molded and presented to the public. This type of marketing strategies utilizes the concepts of competitive and niche strategies that help distinguish the district from others. As master developers and managers they have guided plans and visions for the types of communities and developments that they will create and promote in the future.

Rookwood Commons in Norwood, Ohio provides a great example of how these tools are used in single site and business entity cases. It is a 322,549 Sq. Ft. Shopping Center developed in Cincinnati adjacent to Interstate 71. Their website describes the district noting “Visit the first choice for Cincinnati shopping, Rookwood Commons & Pavilion. Whether shopping in Cincinnati for all day, or just to find that one special item, Rookwood delivers the ultimate shopping experience. As the most notable of Cincinnati shopping malls, this luxurious shopping mall features over 70 fine stores and restaurants,
all within a romantic, open-air setting” (shoprookwood.com). The site offers a window that provides a directory of all businesses, locations; In addition there is reference to their owners and leasing agents, Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate for businesses that are interested in locating there. The figure below shows a site plan of the development which shows the organization and retail mix in the development. By providing an image and understanding of the existing tenant mix and locational qualities the company is effectively advertising to potential businesses using web and other media based sources.

Map 5: Rookwood Commons Site Plan (Source: http://www.shoprookwood.com)
One of the strengths of this type of business marketing model is in the ability to control and manage tenant mixes because of single ownership. The development does not have to coordinate efforts amongst many businesses and entities because it ultimately controls the aesthetics, economics, and promotions of the area. This suggests that enhanced organizational mechanisms and efforts in neighborhood business districts could have a greater impact on the success of the projects. Also this streamlined organization helps in terms of building an image through joint aesthetic improvement projects as well as joint promotional projects.

An additional strength is the ability of these types of developments to attract and retain national chain retail clients. These businesses can in most cases pay higher rents and also carry a great deal of marketing power on their own which adds to the strength of marketing the development. In many cases developers such as this are able to reach out to potential businesses and use existing tenants or anchors as a basis to attract other related or competitive businesses. In the case of Rookwood we can see that this has been used to attract the growing retail concepts of off market reduced cost retailers such as TJ Maxx, Home Goods, Nordstrom’s Rack, and Steinmart. This is an example of how a development such as this can build a marketing concept and component for other retailers that is built around an identity created by a cluster of retailers.

One of the downfalls of this type of development is that it is almost exclusively for national retailers. Independent and local businesses which have characteristically been more involved and invested in the community and in many cases are more sustainable over time in their existing location and space. This suggests that some more scaled down
and locally oriented building and investment projects will create more impactful and sustainable business districts.

Lessons Learned

The case studies have given us some prime examples of successful business oriented marketing strategies that may be applicable to the Renaissance District in Covington. We can see that one of the major drivers of success for these programs are the responsible or implementing organizations. All of the examples have strong leadership mechanisms which are able to drive the marketing and initiatives. Each of the case studies also shows heavy commitment from the municipalities and businesses. There needs to be a great deal of buy in from all parties so that everyone has a stake in the success of these strategies. The cases also each exemplify the importance of identifying a niche market which can gain a competitive advantage over other commercial districts or offerings. Additionally these examples teach us that there is a great deal of value in well designed and comprehensive marketing strategies. These include web and print based media sources.

Practical Application: Covington Renaissance District

Introduction

The Renaissance District in Covington is a component of the State of Kentucky’s Renaissance on Main Program which is part of the Kentucky Department of Local Governments. Their mission is explained as “Renaissance on Main grants support revitalization efforts in Kentucky cities with a goal of safe, vibrant and economically sound downtowns” (http://dlg.ky.gov/grants/stategrants/RenonMain.htm). This project is
also an example of the Main Street Approach which has been developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservations Main Street Program.

The Renaissance Covington Program and District was established in 2000, as an economic development tool for strengthening the main commercial spine that connects downtown to the Historic Madison Business District. This program serves to organize and respond to many issues facing the well being and economic stability of the neighborhood. The note their role as “Renaissance Covington stimulates the vitality of our downtown by fostering proactive community efforts and partnerships concentrating on organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring to socially and economically revitalize downtown Covington for everyone” (http://www.covingtonky.com). They have developed overseeing committees that concentrate on the four points approaches as identified in the Main Street Program and their mission focusing on organization, promotion, economic restructuring, and design. These have been used to leverage investment and reinvestment in the existing character and stock of the community but there is has not been catalytic change. As they have continually done work toward their mission there has yet to be an economic development strategy that has dramatically improve their business districts economic vitality and sustainability.

*Problem Statement*

The Renaissance District has not yet been able to achieve the economic revitalization of the district. Part of this ineffectiveness is because the lack of information and analysis regarding the potential trade markets and the demographics for which they serve. It is critical that we identify and understand the size and type of
population which is surrounding the district. This knowledge could be very powerful in helping devise an effective marketing and development strategy that could help set this district apart. The district is also in direct competition with other large commercial centers such as downtown Cincinnati, and Newport, Kentucky, so the analysis will help understand and define the potential market and market share.

Existing Conditions

Covington’s Renaissance District is located in Covington, Kentucky which is a city of about 40,000 residents. The city is positioned across the Ohio River from Downtown Cincinnati. It is a city that features many cultural and historic assets making it an attractive and urban community. This prime location and historic fabric have led to revitalization and development efforts in the city.

The Renaissance district is located around the central and historic commercial district in the City of Covington. It starts in downtown Covington at 3rd Street and runs south until 11th Street. This district is centralized over Madison Avenue and reaches adjacent blocks. The district has also been expanded to include the former Covington Arts District that adjoining along Pike Street. The district is quite large in size and contains several subsections of like uses or character. The fragmentation and large size of the district may be a current challenge for the success of the organization. The image below shows the current boundary of the district.
The district is made up of predominantly residential and commercial uses in terms of function. There are other uses that also have a presence such as multi, two, and three
family housing complexes, industrial and office. In terms of acreage and size the majority of the district is dedicated to two family housing. Additionally there is a significant amount that is dedicated to retail and service land uses in the district. These trends are reflected in the map and graph below which were derived from the analysis using the LinkGIS Northern Kentucky Database.

Map 7: Renaissance Covington District: Land Use (Source: Jeff Weimer)
The site is currently a mix of businesses and residences that do not have an identifying and coordinating theme. This diversity can be a strength as well as detriment to the success of the district. It can be valuable in terms of creating a sustainable business
district that serves a variety of needs. It can also mean that there is not a commonality in
the businesses that can be used for creating a niche for marketing. Additionally there are
a significant amount of commercial vacancies in the district which further detracts from
the viability and vibrancy of the renaissance district.

In addition from our analysis we can see that there is a fair amount of housing
within close proximity. Although there is a large amount of population around the district
the density of the surrounding there appears to be a need for a more diverse mix of
housing opportunities. This may ultimately support the developments within the district
by increasing the residents in the local market who would be able to walk to the district.

An additional factor which is important to examine is the competitive commercial
and business districts in close proximity to the district. This provides both amenity and
difficulties. The proximity to large employment, cultural, and commercial centers such as
downtown Cincinnati, Newport on the Levee, and uptown in Cincinnati positions this city
and district in a vibrant and dense community that has seen large amounts of growth and
development. Alternatively this suggests that there is a great deal of competition from
competing business districts that offer similar products. Neighborhoods nearby that offer
similar offerings include Newport’s Monmouth Street, Fairfield Avenue in Bellevue,
Kentucky. Additionally in Cincinnati there are neighborhoods such as Northside, Clifton
Gaslight, and the Gateway Quarter in Over—the-Rhine which caters to similar
demographics and audiences. It then becomes imperative that the district distinguishes
it’s offerings from these others in order to create sustainable commercial success.

The Renaissance Covington Group is supported by the City of Covington and has
one full time dedicated staff. The organization seems to lack the staffing and
collaboration that is evident in the other case studies. Additionally from the structure we can see that there appears to be a lack of commitment on the part of the city and the community to support the organization. This is evident through the lack of apparent resources that have been devoted to marketing and development of the group.

The organization has achieved success in many of their projects including, streetscape improvements, façade grants, and bike racks amongst many others. They have been particularly active and successful in leveraging capital for aesthetic improvements to the district. Additionally there are many other projects underway or in the planning phases. They have been able to leverage “over $8.9 million in investments into the Renaissance District and surrounding area” (http://www.covingtonky.com). There are ongoing efforts for revitalization as well including further streetscape improvements and signage.

The organization has created and managed a website with the City of Covington that highlights the program and discusses projects, plans, schedules, and meetings. It also serves as a tool for marketing local involved businesses through their incentives program which offers discounted rates for businesses within the district. Additionally the organization has created a social media network page with Facebook which relays more up to date news and images and links to various supporters or businesses in the district.

**Analysis**

There is a great deal that can be learned from comparison of the case studies and Renaissance Covington District. The structure and implementation of their revitalization efforts and organizations really define the successfulness of the programs. The following
analysis will offer comparisons to inform the recommendations for improvement to the business marketing initiatives of the Covington Renaissance District.

One clear distinction between the all of the chosen case studies and the Covington Renaissance district is the branding and marketing of the community. Each of the programs and developments discussed has helped create an identifiable and marketable image for the community. This can be seen in the artistic branding of Paducah, Kentucky, the diverse restaurants and shopping mix in Allston village, the eclectic small time antique environment of Bellevue, and the industrial wholesaling and multi-cultural environment of the Strip District. The Covington Renaissance District has not been able to create this unifying and marketable business for attraction of new businesses and customers.

The Strip District in Pittsburgh has utilized extensive market and trade area analysis to understand the existing users of the district and the potential users within the larger trade areas of the city and region. Once they identified the market they looked for ways to fill gaps in the market or improve their offerings to identified and target customer base. This type of preliminary market analysis acts much like analysis done when new single site commercial development. This enables the district to really organize and develop around a marketable business mix. This type of organization and economic effort is not common in all cases but it appears to really make a difference in the success and sustainability of the efforts.

Additionally the case studies of the Strip District, Allston Village, and Paducah, Kentucky suggest the value of creating strong residential bases to the economic success and marketability of districts. These examples show that there is inherent value to
businesses in having quality residential housing in close proximity. This is evident in the approach and program in Paducah where they reached out to artists to set up shop and residence in the neighborhood. It was a multifaceted approach targeted a demographic which would be interested in a vibrant live work community. The residential and commercial development and marketing is something that has not been fully developed by the Covington Renaissance District. This would also entail a great deal of collaboration with the neighborhood outside of the commercial space in order to collaborate and co-develop plans.

The marketing techniques for each district or development are also strikingly different and can help form more effective and efficient methods for the Covington District. Each of the main street organizations discussed has an independent website that acts as a virtual portal to their communities. These sites have many features including business directories, events calendars, history, organizational information, lodging information, real estate information, and other promotional and marketing material. They help to market and publish the district and its offerings to potential customers and business owners. Although each of these has varying degrees of design quality they are effective marketing means and can be the basis and platform for other print and media methods. The Renaissance Covington District currently maintains a simple webpage within the City’s website. It does not offer interactive and visual materials which are critical to creating and promoting the brand to potential businesses. The group has however sought to reach into social media networking such as facebook for marketing and networking which provides a more casual and visual means. These sites act like those
of larger retail centers such as Rookwood Commons, which also serve as a means for marketing their image and commercial offerings.

**Recommendations**

These case studies, of varying degrees of size and depth have exemplified useful techniques for creating effective business marketing and promotional strategies. They have been proven winners in improving the economic environments in their districts and projects. Based on the analysis in conjunction with the larger literature there are several basic suggestions that could help improve the organization in order to further develop and meet its goals.

The first of these suggestions would be to create a stronger organizational structure. The staffing and dedicated resources must be built up to create a strong foundation for the district. This suggests that there needs to be a much larger commitment made to the business district by the City. It also means that the community and businesses must also take more ownership in the organization. This is key to the necessary collaboration for sustainable and measurable success.

In terms of the physical boundaries of the district there needs to be some subdivision. The area appears to be too large and comprehensive. By subdividing the district into more manageable sections and uses the approach will be more defined and implementable. It also helps in the identification and establishment of commercial clusters in the district. Narrowing the scope can also help in prioritizing the redevelopment and marketing strategies for the district.

Another key component to success would be a thorough market analysis that examines the existing quality and user patterns of the district as well as those of the
surrounding areas and competing business districts. This information should be done for future organization and planning purposes but should also be packaged as a marketing tool for the district and area. This could serve as a resource for the existing businesses but could also be used as resource for bringing in new businesses. It is also important to analyze that there is not a uniform or standard market area for the district. The geographic location and competitive commercial centers in close vicinity make the market less defined. Any analysis should take the competitive districts into account and should also address the regional market. Additional research should be done on larger state and national commercial trend levels to help identify trends or growth areas which may hold potential to create truly unique business offerings.

An additional recommendation is that they refine their image. Is there something unique about the district that can give it a more powerful and clearer identity for businesses and customers. Each of the five case studies have created clear concepts and ideas about who they are and what types of businesses they offer and what types of customers they are looking to attract. They have begun this process with a branding effort in terms of signage and logos but there needs to be some meaning or concept behind these more design oriented elements. From the existing work of the group it is evident that there are a wide variety of elements and projects happening in the district. These should be brought together whether it means becoming a local and regional international dining experience, or a niche market artist and craftsmen district. This is not to suggest that there should not be diversity in their service and commercial offerings but it should be more coordinated and collaborative. By being more clear and definitive in this process
there is opportunity to create more brand power and identity thus making it easier to market and compete within the region.

There are a variety of concepts which may be adapted for this district. Although most of the case studies rely on the arts or restraint industries they exemplify how clustering unique services in a district can help distinguish these areas. With the competition in the market is important that options outside of restraint, arts, and entertainment districts are explored. There may be some type of unique commercial environment that could be built that becomes a regional draw. Examples of this could be historic perseveration and restoration businesses or services or ethnic and cultural markets and restaurants. This type of niche would help ensure the success of the district as well as the city and surrounding areas. The creation of a complimentary district in the market will also strengthen the larger regional and local markets.

In addition to this identity, it appears that creating an attractive and regularly updated website would also be a valuable tool for reaching and working with potential new businesses. The organization should create a website that is independent of the City which focuses on the district. This should serve as a one stop reference points for all customers and businesses. It should feature event calendars, promotional materials, organizational information, real estate services, tourism services, and a joint promotional platform for the smaller and more independent businesses in the district. This website could also be used to market business incentives geared at growth and development in the area. This would help strengthen their organizational efforts and create a more formalized marketing and organizational platform.
In addition there should be a stronger collaboration with the real estate and leasing environment within the district and the organization. The Renaissance Group should take a leading role becoming an intermediate resource between businesses and real estate leasing and sales people. This relationship can help begin to ensure the area is given focus in the larger market. This is a key factor in helping to distinguish the district from other competitive commercial areas and neighborhoods in the region. It also insures that there is a strong working relationship between the real estate industry and the area which can be important in the case of areas which have seen disinvestment and vacancies.

Another key recommendation is that of further coordination with the city, businesses, and development groups on strengthening and improving the residential market surrounding the district. Growth and development in these areas is directly coordinated with the economic opportunities and experience in the district. If these efforts could have more coordination there could be some opportunities for enhancing the neighborhood and city as a whole as opposed to an isolated commercial area. Housing is often not addressed in the Main Street approach but case study analysis and literature show that there are strong correlations to these elements. The immediate as well as regional contexts of the site have large influences on the outcomes of these efforts.

**Conclusion**

The marketing of neighborhood business districts plays a critical role in improving the economic conditions in these areas. It is critical that efforts are undertaken to reach out and promote the district to potential businesses as well as existing which may be ready to improve or expand. The success of these businesses is crucial to the viability
and sustainability of these smaller retail communities. These businesses are reliant on
many factors but most importantly need to have a strong foundation of understanding of
market demographics and demands. By collaborating with other businesses and
organizations in the neighborhood there can be many positive benefits which will help it
compete against other retail and commercial areas and sustain growth and development in
the future.
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