Beyond Gentrification: Revitalizing Downtown Chelsea

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Tufts UEP Field Project 2013
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--Brian, Deniz & Silas
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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Chelsea Collaborative with a policy and planning toolbox they can use to address problems in the downtown area. As part of the Downtown Task force led by the City of Chelsea, the Collaborative is working to revitalize the downtown area, and this report is designed to give them the information that they need to be successful. The report is divided into three sections, community context, the tool box, and recommendations.

In understanding the context of the community, the research team discussed the planning history, historical issues and created asset maps delineating the physical capital, business distributions and social capital of the area of concentration. To broaden our understanding of the community, we also conducted a focus group in order to discuss the concerns and assets as identified by the affected community.

In the toolbox section, the research team divided the menu for improvement tools into three sections, Capital Improvements, Policy Tools and Business Solutions. The tools represent the wide range of options available to the Collaborative and cover different methods for solving the issues identified in the focus group and section on the community context of Chelsea. In the final section, we chose the most effective, efficient and appropriate tools as our recommendations for the Chelsea Collaborative. These recommendations are structured to provide comprehensive solutions to issues identified by the community, including streetscape improvements and the creation of a community coalition to manage the implementation of selected tools through a community-wide effort.
I. Introduction
Introduction

Team Members and Roles:

Brian DeChambeau  Chelsea planning history, capital improvement recommendations
Deniz Geçim  Business revitalization research and recommendations
Silas Leavitt  Case study research, policy recommendations

Primary Contact:
Brian DeChambeau: telephone:

Project Location:

About the Client

Based in Chelsea, MA, the Chelsea Collaborative is an organization dedicated to serving the needs of the people of Chelsea. Founded in 1998, they work “... to enhance the social, environmental and economic health of the community and its people.” With this end in mind, they are involving themselves in the current efforts to revitalize downtown Chelsea, and it is to aid them in this project that this report has been written.
Project Description and Purpose

The downtown Chelsea field project was conceived as a co-operation between Chelsea Collaborative and a UEP field projects team. The main goal of the project is to develop informed policy and planning recommendations for revitalizing downtown Chelsea (see map above) to improve the quality of life of the area's current residents. This area possess many attributes that mark it as unique, some of which are seen as more desirable than others by residents and members of Chelsea Collaborative. It is the purpose of this project to offer recommendations on how to accentuate and build upon the positive aspects of the community while working to solve some of the problems that it faces.

To do this, the context and planning history in Chelsea must be understood. The context of downtown Chelsea is described below, including demographics, asset maps, a history of recent plans created on the city, and a description of the focus group conducted for this report. While downtown Chelsea has largely been ignored in recent plans for Chelsea, these plans do tend to show common threads of community concerns and desires throughout the city that are very relevant to the downtown area. Chelsea’s demographics set it apart from many cities in the region, and any solution should take into account its unique combination of density, immigrant population, and income. Most importantly, any solutions to the issues that downtown Chelsea faces should be heedful of what residents and community members want for their community, not what might seem sensible outside of Chelsea’s specific context.

From the foundation provided by this contextual research we created a toolkit, or collection of potential actions. It is the aim of this toolkit to provide a wide range of strategies that could effectively address the problems and assets of Chelsea in a revitalization effort and it is from this toolkit that the final recommendations are drawn. By being formatted in this way, the report not only offers concrete recommendations, but also presents alternative courses of action should it be decided that these alternative better suit the needs of the community.
The downtown possesses many features, from historical architecture to well-frequented shops that should be preserved and fostered, even though it is also the center for some less desirable activities. Residents complain of problems ranging from unwanted street behavior to chaotic circulation and several barriers to business development plague the area. While these problems will not be solved overnight, many of the positive attributes of downtown Chelsea can be preserved and improved upon as the city and the community work to make downtown Chelsea become like their vision for it.
II. Downtown Chelsea Context
Downtown Chelsea Context

2.1 Neighborhood Attributes

It is important to understand exactly what sort of community Chelsea is. Below, the demographics of Chelsea as a whole are described. These are important because they are an indication of what sort of solutions might be appropriate for the downtown and what solutions may not be relevant. Following the demographics, we examine Chelsea from an outside perspective, without the input of community members. Finally, the details of our interactions with community members are explained, which are a strong indication of what is important to community members according to their own values.

Chelsea is a community whose demographics set it apart from most cities in Massachusetts and from the country as a whole. As far as population is concerned Chelsea is relatively small, with 35,177 inhabitants according to the 2010 census. However, its population density of 15,902 people per square mile makes it the second densest city in Massachusetts, after Somerville. It has decidedly more Hispanic residents as a percentage of its population than Massachusetts as a whole; 62.1% of Chelsea’s residents describe themselves as Hispanic or Latino, while 9.9% of the population of Massachusetts describes itself in this way. Chelsea is below the Massachusetts and national average in terms of wealth as well, with a median household income of $43,155 and 23.3% of residents living below the poverty line compared with the rest of Massachusetts, which has a median household income is $65,981 and whose poverty rate is 10.7%.

This unique combination of demographics must play an important role in any solutions that are implemented in Chelsea, as they certain come with a unique set of challenges. Two areas for which this information is especially relevant are barriers to business development and funding any projects in the community. The large population of Hispanic immigrants in Chelsea are also active in the economic life of the area, but may not be familiar with standard business practices and resources available to businesses in the US. The relative poverty of the community is an indication of its tax base, which could mean that funds are less available than
in a wealthier community (further information from the U.S. Census 2010 has been compiled in Appendix 1).

Issues and Attributes

The information in this section comes primarily from observation by the team members, as well as discussion with various stakeholders in the community. Though it is informed by the opinions of those in the community, the focus group discussed in section 2.3 is where community opinions and values are discussed in at more length.

The Built Environment

Just as it is densely populated, downtown Chelsea also possesses a density of noteworthy sites and features. To begin with, it is well-provided with architectural assets, especially along Broadway. While not every building possesses particular beauty, downtown Chelsea has several buildings of uncommon quality that should be thought of when considering revitalization of the area. In contrast, many of the storefronts along Broadway and throughout the project area have fallen into some degree of disrepair and do not present a particularly inviting front for shoppers. While blighted conditions are perhaps most prevalent along Division Street, this area might actually be the least important part of the project area considering that it is little more than an alley and is not well-frequented. While Division Street is home to the most buildings in disrepair, there are still others outside of Division Street that are not aesthetically appealing that would do well to be repaired.

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Table 2-1 shows demographics in Chelsea and Somerville in 2000 and 2010 to allow for comparison both geographically and temporally.
Though they might not feel a part of the downtown, drivers are also at times guilty of some unwanted behaviors. The interaction between pedestrians and drivers are generally tense, and both groups are guilty of not respecting the rules that apply to them. This may be due, in large degree, to the lack of markings and proper programming on the streets to direct these interactions. While they may be busy and chaotic, the streets of downtown Chelsea are lively, and have a good deal of potential, especially if assets like the plaza at its southern end and the ample street trees are accented and built upon.

Asset Maps

Below are a series of maps that show the locations of several types of businesses in downtown Chelsea. These have been included as a part of the context of the project area because they are often discussed as both community assets and contributors to some of the issues that exist in the area.

Image 2-1 shows the locations of liquor stores in the project area. (Source: US Census TIGER files)
Images 2-2 (above) and 2-3 (below) show the locations of salon and food-related businesses respectively. (Source: US Census TIGER files)
2.2 Planning History in Chelsea

Since the middle of the 1990’s, Chelsea has received increasing attention from developers looking to invest in an area ripe with opportunity. It has also been the subject of several plans and studies aimed at improving life in the city, the number of which might be attributed to Chelsea lacking a master plan since the early 1970’s. These projects can be organized into three main categories: physical developments and development-based plans, neighborhood improvement plans, and plans aimed at creating or improving community amenities. Some of these plans, like the urban renewal district created in 1994, have been implemented with great success, while others have been cast aside as too ambitious or unattainable. It is worthwhile to note that, though there have been an impressive number of plans generated for Chelsea in the past two decades, these plans have rarely made mention of the downtown area, choosing instead to focus on areas that are perhaps seen as better investments of time and resources.

Development Plans

In 1994, a report was done by RKG Associates on the possibility of economic redevelopment of the area of Chelsea that has since become known as the Everett Avenue Urban Renewal District. The plan made a number of suggestions about desirable outcomes from the redevelopment of this former industrial area including what one might expect: increasing local employment, improving circulation, and encouraging a more coherent land use pattern. The report also noted that, “under current market conditions and financial requirements in the private sector, the study area cannot and will not be redeveloped in the short term unless the City of Chelsea offers financial assistance, grants, and other incentives to attract potential developers” (Chelsea Economic Development Board 2013). The plan called for specific interventions in the area by the City of Chelsea to make the area conducive to development including “direct eminent domain actions in certain areas of the district, adoption of economic incentives throughout the area, completion of of public infrastructure improvements for traffic and public safety reasons, and other rehabilitative efforts in the area” (Chelsea Economic Development Board 2013).

The implementation of the plan resulted in what was described by the Chelsea city manager Jay Ash as “performance development” (Ash 2010). This is a strategy adopted by the city to aid and encourage development in the urban renewal district by helping developers to acquire land from current owners, as well as streamlining the development approval process and being relatively flexible about the uses in this zone (Ash 2010). The result of this plan has been a significant amount of investment in the area including the Wyndam Hotel, as well as several other residential and commercial projects (Chelsea Record 2012).
Investment in the industrial area near the Mystic Mall was encouraged by the success of the Everett Avenue Urban Renewal District. Within the past several years national chains like T.J. Maxx have opened their doors in this area near the giant (over 75,000 sf) Market Basket that has been operating in the area for several years (Chelsea Record 2011). These developments have occurred in spite of the fact that the zoning designations in the area have remained a combination of industrial and shopping center, despite the change recommended in a 2005 report commissioned by the City of Chelsea by Crosby, Schlessinger and Smallridge, LLC titled Fostering Smart Growth in Chelsea: Creating Opportunity for Sustainable Development, which proposed several zoning changes for the area.

This same report mentions what has been called Parkside Commons, Chelsea Commons, and Parkway Plaza, but for the sake of simplicity will be referred to here as Parkway Plaza. This was another neglected area that has seen recent investment. There now exists a large (220,000 square feet, 786 parking spaces) commercial development in the area, which has retained its zoning as a shopping center area. This area is surrounded by residential areas, which have also seen some investment in recent years. In the cases of both Parkway Plaza
and Mystic Mall, the City of Chelsea did not make the zoning changes suggested by Crosby, Schlessinger and Smallridge, LLC, but were still able to attract investment. Though this may not show a commitment to the vision of smart growth that Crosby, Schlessinger and Smallridge put forward, the attention paid to these areas does evidence a long-term commitment to them over other areas of the city.

In the past decade, the city has made zoning changes along the Broadway corridor to shape development in two specific areas. The first of these changes was in the Crescent Avenue/Upper Broadway area in eastern Chelsea. This change dealt with the increasing conversion of older buildings into residential units, and the concern that this was happening too rapidly and was not controlled (Chelsea Department of Planning and Development n.d.). The second of these areas is the Gerrish Avenue Transitional Area, which was rezoned from industrial to residential when the city’s zoning code was rewritten after it emerged from receivership. As a result of this zoning change and the RPOD\(^1\) residential overlay districts that were created in 2012, the area has seen quite a lot of investment. In fact, Chelsea’s zoning board approved a ninety-six unit residential development at 22-44 Gerrish Avenue and 188 Highland Street during their meeting in September of 2012, which will be built in addition to the units that have recently been constructed across the street. (Zoning Board of Appeals 2012).

Perhaps the most comprehensive development plan for the community is the 2004 Community Development Plan. This plan addresses a variety of development issues described in the opening of the report:

“...affordable housing for all, abundant youth programs, well-maintained properties and streets, a vibrant and aesthetically pleasing Downtown, greater economic development, convenient and reliable public transportation, a contiguous park system providing greenway corridors that traverse the City’s neighborhoods, and expanding historic preservation and cultural activities. Most of all, though, Chelsea seeks to actively engage its citizenry in promoting a local agenda that serves each and every resident of city” (City of Chelsea 2004, 1).

As the above quote suggests, the plan addresses a wide range of issues in the city as a whole, not all of which are directly relevant to the downtown. However, it provides detailed information on economic activity in the city as well as information about past economic development efforts and strategies to encourage economic development in the city as a whole.

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1. The RPOD-1 and RPOD-2 overlay districts regulate the density and dimensions of residential developments. For more information, refer to the zoning code for the City of Chelsea.
Development projects in Chelsea since the 1990’s have been relatively successful, and continue to shape the face of Chelsea. However, these projects and plans address very specific areas, while others are neglected. While each neighborhood of Chelsea faces slightly different problems and brings different advantages to the table, the success of certain development plans should be looked to as an example of one way to encourage economic development in the city. One thread that ties all of these projects together is their use of abandoned former industrial sites for development, and it is important to note that these sorts of sites are not available in the downtown area.

Neighborhood Plans

Over the past decade, plans for several of Chelsea’s neighborhoods have emerged from various sources. Two of these plans focus on the Bellingham Hill and Gerrish Avenue areas. The most recent of these plans was created by the City of Chelsea, residents of the neighborhood, and Chelsea Neighborhood Developers. This plan is the result of several community charettes in which these three groups met to create a list of things they would like to see improved, and an action plan to affect the change they agreed is necessary. The areas that need improvement that came out of these meetings were as follows: security, traffic speed, trash on the streets, housing disrepair, parks/green space, lack of parking, economic development, and social connections (City of Chelsea et al. 2009). While little follow-up information is available about the implementation of this plan, and it is still too early to see all of the results, this planning process is valuable in that it provides insight into what issues residents who live near the downtown consider to be their top priorities. Given their proximity, there is some overlap between the interests of those in the Bellingham Hill and Downtown neighborhoods.

![Image 2-5 Locations of the neighborhood plans for Chelsea since 1994.](image_url)
The older of these two plans was created in 2007 by Stull and Lee, Inc. with contributions from several other firms. It is interesting to note both the differences and similarities between these two plans, considering their different sources. Both plans make note of how beneficial the use of the CSX right of way\(^2\) could be in both the short term and long term. The agreed upon use is a multi-modal path in the near future, and after the urban ring project is extended to Chelsea in the form of bus rapid transit (BRT)\(^4\), a reconsideration of the best use of the CSX right of way (Stull and Lee, Inc et. al. 2007, 42; City of Chelsea et al. 2009). All groups would prefer that a multi-modal path could coexist with the BRT facilities in this right of way. Both plans also address the quality of housing in the area, though the Stull and Lee plan makes housing its primary focus. This plan sets out several goals for improving the housing stock of the Gerrish Avenue/Bellingham neighborhood that include adjusting zoning to manage housing density, improving the physical qualities of the built environment in the area, and promoting sustainable development (Stull and Lee, Inc et al. 2007, 5). Perhaps the biggest point of contention between the two plans is the issue of parking. While residents of the community expressed a desire to see more parking in the area, the Stull and Lee plan suggest that parking requirements are lowered for new development, as might be expected from a plan that considers sustainable transportation a priority (Stull and Lee, Inc et al. 2007, 41).

In August of 2009, a plan was created for the Addison/Orange neighborhood to the north of downtown Chelsea. The eastern portion of this neighborhood overlaps with the Everett Ave. Urban Renewal area previously discussed. This plan, created by a team of planners and consultants formed by Vine Associates, Inc., addresses overcrowding, foreclosures, illegal rooming houses, infrastructure and open space needs, as well as redevelopment in the urban renewal district. As a part of the creation of the plan, community meetings were held in which residents of the study area were asked a series of questions about how they would like to see their neighborhood improved, as well as what they viewed as its positive attributes. Unsurprisingly, residents mentioned many of the same issues as residents of other nearby neighborhood, including lack of traffic calming, lack of infrastructure for non-car transportation, crime, lack of designated parking, and lack of open space (Vine and Associates 2009, 16). Also mentioned were a desire to clean up the community and keep it free of debris.

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2. The CSX right of way is strip of land previously set aside for use by the CSX rail company that runs from Chelsea Creek to Broadway just north of the downtown. As it is unused, various plans have been created for repurposing it.
3. The urban ring is a theoretical transit project that would create a peripheral transit line (most likely an extension of the silver line) to connect the existing transit corridors circumferentially.
4. Bus rapid transit is a form of transportation that combines the flexibility and affordability of buses with the efficiency of more permanent transit modes like light rail through separate lanes for buses.
and litter, as well as establish a neighborhood character and identity. A variety of solutions are proposed by this plan, many of which include infrastructure improvements like well-marked sidewalks; consistent street design, repair, and maintenance; the addition of street trees; and strict enforcement of building codes and parking requirements that give the neighborhood a coherent and create neighborhood gateways that distinctly mark the Addison/Orange neighborhood as a distinct unit in the city of Chelsea (Vine and Associates 2009, 40).

The final and most recent of the Chelsea neighborhood plans, Chelsea Vision, was done in the summer of 2012 by a team of Sasaki interns with the consultation of more senior Sasaki associates, as well as the City of Chelsea. While this plan is not as focused on specific areas as previous plans, it is notable in that it corroborates the information about community need expressed in other plans. The plan focuses a great deal on improving the accessibility of the city to pedestrians through what the writers call “The Loop” (Sasaki Associates 2012, 32). The Loop is a small network of multi-modal paths that would serve the southeast portion of the city. The plan also focuses a great deal on the appearance of different portions of Chelsea, but perhaps most on the appearance of the Route 1 overpass that cuts through the city and the streetscape more generally.

While each of these plans address different neighborhoods, most of them focus on several aspects of the community that are not neighborhood-specific. These issues are as follows: security; green infrastructure; parking; pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure and the streetscape more generally; trash and community cleanliness; the appearance of the built environment; open space; and circulation patterns. Based upon the commonality between the different plans created, any plan implemented in the downtown area should take these common focuses into account and address them specifically.

Community Amenity Plans

Chelsea possesses a surprising number of untapped community amenities for such a small and dense city, which have been the subject of various plans. The broadest plan for community amenities in Chelsea is far and away the 2010-2016 Open Space Plan, which is the continuation of an ongoing focus on open space in Chelsea. The plan details current open space resources and opportunities to increase open space throughout the city in addition to community uses and opinions of open space in Chelsea. Chelsea is a city that is very built-out and densely-populated, thus open space is at a premium. There are currently 40 parcels of open space totaling 52.6 acres in Chelsea with the most popular open space being Mary O’Malley Park to the southwest of downtown (Vanese Hangen Brustin 2010, 42). Perhaps the most promising place for a new recreational area is the CSX right of way that runs through the center of the city. The often-discussed multi-modal path that is to follow this right of way is
addressed in Vanesse Hangen Brustin’s plan as having great potential, and this view is shared by the community members that they worked with in their planning process (Vanesse Hangen Brustin 2010, 46). The document also mentions the need for greenspace in the city to address runoff in the Charles River watershed, as well as the need to make sure park-goers are kept safe from speeding cars and illegal activity (Vanesse Hangen Brustin 2010, 50). As a whole, the plan lays out a detailed and realistic strategy for providing for the open space needs of Chelsea, while also considering important restrictions like the designated port area (DPA) along a significant portion of the Chelsea Creek waterfront. The one specific mention that the report makes of improvements in the downtown area is a short note that the City of Chelsea is currently working with the state to “identify potential improvements to pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the downtown” (Vanesse Hangen Brustin 2010, 55).

Another large, but more focused, plan titled “CSX Right of Way Multi Use Path Feasibility: Conceptual Design Study Chelsea, MA“ suggests the CSX right of way be used as a community path and eventually as a route for the urban ring transit line. The 2011 plan details very thoroughly where the path should go and how it should be developed. While the path along the CSX right of way does not go directly through the downtown, this plan certainly should inform any decisions made about infrastructure improvements in the downtown area. This is made even more important by the fact that an entrance to the proposed greenway, a potentially important transit node for non-auto transportation, is located on Broadway near the downtown (Fay, Spofford and Thorndike 2011, 23). If the urban ring BRT project through Chelsea is realized as is discussed in the report, it will be even more important that all forms of transportation have access to the CSX right of way through the downtown area because there would be stops along the corridor including at Broadway.

The waterfront in Chelsea is another historically important part of the community, and has been the subject of two plans in recent years: the “Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan (2005)” and the “Chelsea Creek Vision Plan (2010)”. The Chelsea Creek Vision Plan (2010) created a community vision for what the Chelsea Creek waterfront could become, including twelve parks along the water’s edge to increase public access and the the repurposing of the CSX right of way as a public greenway. While each of these plans provides suggestions that would undoubtedly improve the waterfront in the eyes of Chelsea residents, the DPA and Chapter 91 designations of the entire Chelsea Creek waterfront make it very difficult for uses to be changed in the area. While some progress can and has been made on the Mill Creek waterfront to the north, as well as in the area the the southwest near Mary O’Malley Park, the Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan notes:
“Any suggested changes to the land or waterside of areas located within the DPA and within Chapter 91 jurisdiction to allow non water-dependent industrial uses that are not temporary or Supporting Uses as defined in the Chapter 91 regulations, will require either changing the DPA boundaries or developing a Municipal Harbor Plan that includes a DPA Master Plan, both of which involve rigorous planning processes involving various state agencies led by the Office of Coastal Zone Management. Changes to water usage in the Study Area must also be carefully considered to ensure that any future recreational or other non industrial water-based vessels do not interfere with the vitally important water-dependent traffic that utilizes the industrialized portion of the Chelsea waterfront” (Vine and Associates 2007, 4).

Thus while the waterfront, especially on the Chelsea Creek, is an area that is important to the community, any large-scale improvement to alter it will be met with difficulties. However, the visioning and planning processes involved in creating this plan are certainly valuable to the community, regardless of how easy or difficult it might be to implement them.

There have been several smaller efforts in Chelsea to improve certain aspects of the community, though to call them comprehensive plans might be an overstatement. The first of these is the effort to improve green infrastructure in Chelsea to help manage stormwater runoff and create a more pleasant community. The City of Chelsea has several pages on their website devoted to green infrastructure, and the EPA released a short report designating Chelsea as a community partner in the development of green infrastructure in Chelsea in 2011 (U.S Environmental Protection Agency 2011). However, these resources offer few concrete plans. It is also important to note that Chelsea Collaborative has a Green Space Committee that seeks to improve the amount and quality of green spaces in Chelsea. The second of these efforts it's the “Cleaning-up Our Act” program designed in 2010 to address concerns about litter and the general appearance of the community (City of Chelsea 2010). While the program generally falls outside of the purview of this report, it is worth noting that it mentions simple fixes like additional trash and recycling barrels on the street that, if made a part of a larger plan for the streetscape, could fit in with planning recommendations since the trash problem has been mentioned at several planning meetings.
2.3 Community Voices

This section delineates how we used an intensive focus group study to gather local opinions of downtown Chelsea. These opinions encompass usage, perceived problems, positive characteristics, and vision for the future of the area. Our purpose in gathering this input was to gauge community interests regarding downtown Chelsea. In line with this goal, we also attended a meeting of the Downtown Task Force which brought together stakeholders from throughout the community, two Chelsea Collaborative Green Space meetings, and held meetings with the Director of Planning and Development of Chelsea, Mr. John DePriest, and the Executive Director of the Chelsea Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Donald M. Harney.

The focus group conducted by our team was intended to:

- Identify community views, usages, roles and activities involving the Downtown,
- Conduct manifest content analysis defined as looking at whether the participant comments cluster around shared themes (Gaber and Gaber 2007),
- Refine physical improvements, policy tools and business solutions based on planning and policy training to reflect community opinions,
- Provide stakeholders with an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding the Downtown area.

Preparations

In order to refine our recommendations to reflect the needs of Downtown Chelsea, we asked our client to reach out to law enforcement agents, city planners and council members, residents, property owners, absentee landlords, business owners, workers, and customers of the area. We decided that this would be the most efficient use of time in gathering stakeholders for the focus group due to the connections Chelsea Collaborative already has with the community. Their methods included phoning the stakeholders as well as announcing the focus group at their monthly Green Space meeting where they asked participants to spread the word. This qualifies our focus group as an intensive focus group that aims for observation saturation.

This report contains one focus group that was held on March 21st, 2013 at the Chelsea Collaborative offices. We chose this place and time because it is the same as the monthly Green Space meeting hosted by the Collaborative, so it is a time that some community members would already be attending meetings in the same building. Before finalizing the focus group preparations, we had intended to attend the Downtown Task Force meeting at least twice as part of the City of Chelsea’s efforts to address issues surrounding the revitalization of Downtown Chelsea, but this was not possible due to inclement weather.
During the focus group, one team member facilitated the meeting while the two others took notes. The facilitation was based on a focus group guide written to create a fluent process and prevent impediments which would cause difficulties in recording the responses (Appendix 2). We developed the focus group guide based on meetings with Chelsea Collaborative, a literature and case study review of similar community economic development initiatives, (Loukaitou-Sideris 2000; Markusen 2004; Muske and Woods 2004; Sutton 2010) and charettes held for the development plans for Bellingham Hill and Gerrish Avenue discussed in section 2.2 of this report.

The facilitator introduced the focus group, initiated the consent process and then went through the focus group guide. The questions for participants were clearly worded and terms which stakeholders might have difficulty understanding were defined on a whiteboard visible to all. Participants were provided with a handout which described the consent process and listed some issues in the downtown to encourage discussion (Appendix 3). Questions designed to generate enthusiasm in the subject were asked at the beginning, questions with content were asked in the middle, and questions about the subjects vision for downtown Chelsea were asked at the end. The research team generated a conversational format with follow up questions based on earlier comments.

The questions in the beginning addressed personal experiences in the area such as uses and roles in downtown Chelsea, as well as participation in improvement projects. The questions in the middle of the focus group addressed the problems in the Downtown and problems faced by businesses and entrepreneurs. The facilitator initiated this segment by going around the room and asking for the subject to mention their biggest concern about the topic. Next, the facilitator asked the subjects to go through a list of problems we put together in developing the focus group guide. This section was closed by asking the participants to discuss any other concerns they had about the area. The questions at the end asked for participants to discuss their vision for the project area.

Focus Group Participants

Twelve participants attended the focus group. This number is within the range of 6-12 participants Gaber and Gaber (2007) suggest for ideal intensive focus groups where the aim is to achieve observation saturation. The 2010 Census reveals that Chelsea’s population is 49.1% female and 62.1% is of Hispanic origin. Nine of our focus group participants were women, three of them were men, and the majority of the group were Chelsea residents. Eleven out of twelve reported that they regularly used the Downtown. In terms of internal validity, this sample represented the demographics of Chelsea with certain limitations, and their usage of the area made their opinions valuable to our research.
All of our stakeholders identified with a role in the Downtown and the most common roles were community advocate, Chelsea resident, and business customer. A community advocate has been classified as someone who works for the Collaborative and/or is a community member otherwise involved in the downtown area. While this sample allowed us to conduct a fluent focus group, we were unable to gather the opinions of the business community, property owners, absentee landlords and city planners and council members. The timing of the event and the availability of the facilities of our client limited our process of gathering other stakeholders.

Results of the Focus Group

In this section we assume that our subjects adequately represent the population of Chelsea concerned with the downtown. The first segment addresses personal experiences in the downtown, the second segment addresses general problems and business problems in the area, and the final segment addresses what the stakeholders like about the Downtown and their visions for the future of the area. The charts show the tallies of participant comments that cluster around shared themes.

### Table 2-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Participants</th>
<th>Role in the Downtown Chelsea Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Works and Shops in Downtown Businesses and Community Advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Works and Shops in Downtown Businesses and Community Advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Chelsea Resident and Community Advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Works and Shops in Downtown Businesses and Community Advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Works and Shops in Downtown Businesses and Community Advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Law Enforcement Agent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Chelsea Resident and Shops in Downtown Businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>Chelsea Resident and Shops in Downtown Businesses</td>
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<td>Participant 9</td>
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<td>Participant 10</td>
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<td>Participant 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>Chelsea Resident and Shops in Downtown Businesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2-2 contains information on the roles of the stakeholders that attended the focus group.
Eleven out of twelve participants use Downtown Chelsea regularly. Their usages were clustered in the categories shown in the above chart. As an example to this process, one participant mentioned that they take the bus and work in the Downtown three days a week. This comment was placed in the business and transportation hub cluster. This process was applied to all observations. Six comments for business patronage, five comments for walk through and three comments for transportation hub were recorded.

Figure 2-6 shows downtown usage by the stakeholders that attended the focus group.
Community outreach and street beautification were the main clusters identified in the discussion to improve the downtown. There were three comments about community outreach efforts and these included activities such as healthy eating initiatives advocating for increased fresh fruit availability, recycling education, and singing songs about litter collection and tree planting. There were two comments about litter collection and the Blue City Initiative, which involves street clean-up and evaluation. Participants mentioned activities involving trees twice, which included the Adopted Island Program, where an area located on the corner of Everett Avenue was torn up and made into a green space. Another activity mentioned was the Green Space Initiative. This program was created in Chelsea to encourage appreciation of and clean up trees on Broadway. Two participants said they had never been involved in efforts discussed by others or that they do not come to Chelsea enough to be involved.

Figure 2-7 shows participation in activities to improve downtown Chelsea by the stakeholders that attended the focus group.
To begin a discussion of negative aspects of the downtown, we asked participants to identify the problem in the downtown that bothered them the most. There were six comments that indicated a belief in a relationship between business activities and loitering in the downtown. Fast food restaurants, liquor stores, a pizza shop, and the methadone clinic were seen as some of the culprits facilitating this loitering. There were seven comments that discussed the environment in the downtown. One participant mentioned that pedestrians and drivers exhibited a lack of awareness of crosswalks and stop signs. Such comments were placed in the Pedestrian Traffic Flow Difficulties cluster. Another participant said that they thought the downtown had a lot of potential and that trash was a problem. These comments were placed under the Trash and the Pedestrian Traffic Flow Difficulties clusters. Participants also discussed unwanted behavior in the downtown. Comments included how there are disrespectful men that whistle while playing cards and dominoes in front of the City Hall in the summer, as well as worries about smoking, prostitution and drug dealing.

Figure 2-8 shows downtown issues described by the stakeholders that attended the focus group.
In the second half of discussing the problems in the Downtown, we provided the stakeholders with a list of problems and asked them to indicate which of them were most important to them. The above graph illustrates that cleanliness and security were the participants’ greatest concerns. Aside from tallying responses from the list, there was also a discussion of the problems on the list after the previous discussion of the major problems. The contents of the list were not mutually exclusive. As such, stakeholders discussed several problems under the framework of a problem they identified.

One participant discussed their experiences with public drunkenness and the inadequacy of law enforcement in resolving safety concerns: “I don’t feel safe at all, when it is really dark, I don’t like waiting for my bus. This guy was intoxicated at the bus stop he was just saying comments. I just feel like police just stand there. Can’t you get arrested for public intoxication? Yeah, they don’t do anything.” Another participant discussed the safety of the middle school students: “Middle school is right there on Broadway, they see everything.” One participant expressed a common view amongst group members that people selling drugs were not bothered by police presence in the area: “The people that are there feel safe.”
The unsafe environment created by a lack of regard for traffic rules were discussed: “Sometimes you see people that are crossing the street, they just jump into the street, they don’t even look to the sides.” “Sometimes you have one person double parked here, and then someone else comes and double parks on the other side.” Also, the frequency of unwanted businesses were mentioned: “When you count the amount of places between City Hall and the rotary, there are seven places to buy alcohol and drink on the spot. There are a lot of spots that there are people selling drugs.”

Business Problems

The research team planned to ask about barriers faced by local entrepreneurs and businesses in the downtown using the same structure in the general problems discussion. However, since business representatives were absent from the focus group, we generated a demand side discussion of business issues by asking the group about business issues. To enable Chelsea Collaborative to continue research on local perspectives about business issues, we created a survey which can be used to generate a supply side discussion by gathering the opinions of downtown business owners (Appendix 3). While we were unable to administer this survey due to timing constraints, it is reasonable to assume Chelsea Collaborative can use it in the future in their revitalization efforts.

Under these constraints, we asked the focus group participants whether there were problems caused by businesses in the downtown, what the barriers to entrepreneurial activity they thought existed for business development, and asked for further comments on the downtown. In discussing businesses and downtown problems, the negative comments clustered around the view that business owners contributed to problem behaviors and the positive comments clustered around how the businesses catered to local demographics. Business uniformity, absentee landlords, and Chelsea’s location were seen as barriers to entrepreneurialism.

Participants who identified business practice as a problem identified a relationship between storefront appearance and a lack of customers: “People should clean the front of their businesses.”, “One thing I would change about businesses is the way they look. They look torn down a little. If the businesses were remodeled a little, Broadway would look much better.”, “They have been there for a while. The signs are usually faded, ripped.”. These participants also expressed the view that loitering is facilitated by business owners and that this makes customers uncomfortable: “Small businesses are not used because of loitering.”

Monopolization of business ownership was criticized: “ lot of the businesses are owned by the same people. For example, I know there’s 3 stores.
A clothing store and then a cell phone store and I don’t know what the third one is but they are all owned by the same man.” There was also discussion of business uniformity: “We need more diversity when we are talking about businesses. We have a lot of the same. There are a lot of liquor stores, Tedeschi.”

There were also some participants who found positive aspects in the downtown related to businesses: “You can buy things you forgot to buy some place else real quick.” “We are a low income community. We use the discount stores. A lot of people use the downtown. Everything is in the Downtown. We don’t want to lose this cultural identity.” Some of these comments also reflected a need for improvement: “I like eclectic. I don’t necessarily like Wellesley. I like walking down Broadway it is so different. I get my watch cleaned by the Vietnamese Jeweler, 5 dollars…and all different things you find that are just great. However, I do think that there is a certain border between eclectic and out of control.”

The second segment of the discussion concerned problems for new businesses and barriers to entrepreneurial activity. Participants believed that the location and condition of Chelsea inhibited activity: “I think Chelsea is picked on. You see these other places nearby that have a lot of green space and we have all this. We do have one of the highest asthma rates and I don’t think it’s fair.” In line with this, the difficulty to attract people who worked in Chelsea to shop in the downtown was identified: “There’s two populations in Chelsea. There’s one population that lives here and another population who works here. There are a lot of offices here of people with higher income but they don’t come into the Downtown area. If the Downtown area seemed more inviting then people would come from the businesses.”

In addition, the concentration of the types of businesses was discussed. Participants discussed how several foreign-born entrepreneurs were operating a substantial number of establishments such as hair salons and Hispanic restaurants: “I feel like some barriers for entrepreneurs is that there’s already many of the same businesses. You can’t open the same business again.” “You have a couple Chinese places then you have most of your Spanish restaurants and then it’s all like corner stores, convenience stores and discount stores. You can’t really switch it up.”. While participants believed that the existence of established businesses prevented new but similar businesses developing, one participant discussed a story of how diversifying restaurants were prevented by the city bundling liquor licenses: “She [a friend] opened her own restaurant. She wanted to have a liquor license, just wine and beer because she didn’t want to have hard liquor. It is just for people to eat, to have a glass of wine or whatever. It was so hard for her to get that because the licenses are limited and they just want to sell the entire license with hard liquor. They were offering a deal for her and she did not want it because she did not have the money. You see all of the liquor stores doing whatever they want. It is not making sense.”
Visions for the Downtown

In the final segment of the focus group, we asked the participants what they liked about Downtown Chelsea and what they envisioned for the future of the area. The research team aimed to collect information about what the community wanted to see in the future of the downtown and allow participants to make concluding remarks. In their visions, participants expressed desire for more color, better businesses, and fewer safety concerns.

In previous segments, participants mentioned that they liked the eclectic, accessible and convenient nature of the Downtown. They also discussed how there was room for improvement: “Broadway has a lot of potential and space. We can do a lot more, we just don’t.”, One participant mentioned that the architecture and history of the area should not be forgotten: “I like the architecture of the buildings, very beautiful. I like that I know the people. I feel like I am at home. I always find someone to talk to. There’s always a lot of people walking around. I like to see that. It is an active Downtown area. There is a lot of history in Chelsea.” “It would also be great if we could focus on the cultural aspects
and we try to highlight that as a city because we are very rich in a lot of stuff that sometimes people do not see as a good thing. The priority is that we should be telling people who we are, why you should come here." The participants were in agreement that the Downtown was a vibrant place where people talk to each other, had memories about and that these elements prevented safety concerns from triumphing over the energy: “[Describes route to work] The Broadway route is a little longer but I always take it because there is energy and you feed off of that energy. I feel much better doing that. Just all the people, the kids, the mothers and the fathers. Everybody. Even the guys hanging out in front of Chelsea walk. It all kind of adds up.”

In discussing which improvements should be made in the downtown, a demand for more colors was mentioned nine times: “colors, flowers, painted trash cans, murals, cleanliness”, “cleanliness and color, bringing in new people”, “colorful banners”. Suggestions for more colors included painted trash cans, murals, colored benches, colorful banners placed between light posts, art and flowers. There was also a discussion of more green space, cleanliness, emphasizing architecture and adding bike lanes into the existing streetscape design.

There was a discussion of how businesses would contribute to improvements. Some participants noted that they did not want additional fast food businesses: “I would like to see Broadway with more green space. There’s enough fast food places in Chelsea, we don’t need anymore. Safer, more of a place that you would like to go because you feel that warming feeling.” Others mentioned that they would prefer better, diverse restaurants and businesses with lighting permitting the customer to see inside: “Where the plaza is and the gazebo and the bus stop? I would like to see that totally redesigned. I would really like to see post office square with green and benches and places to sit with a sandwich or a coffee shop. I would like to see a little bit more diversity, in terms of restaurants and stores. I would like to see the architecture more featured…”, “There is a restaurant and I didn’t go in it because at first I thought it was a run down and it is not. I went inside and it is really good.”, “I would envision Downtown Chelsea as a Davis Square without the lounge and club scene.”

One participant discussed how they would prefer it if incoming businesses and structural improvements would not create an environment of gentrification but one where people who had been living in Chelsea for a long time would be able to enjoy these amenities: “I want all of this improvement for the people that live here right now. I don’t want all of this improvement to start pushing people out. That is something that is happening. The increasing rent. Of course people want to move here because it is beautiful. I want all of that but the people that live here that work here for 10-15 years? That is the people who should get the benefit of the improvement.”
As seen in their discussion, the improvements desired related to business,
safety and furthering cultural identity. They also want new people to come into
the Downtown while preventing the out-migration of existing families.
III. Downtown Chelsea Toolbox
We have created what we call a toolbox to describe a range of options, rather than only the solutions that we feel are best for downtown Chelsea. This a menu of possible solutions for the problems that have been identified in the area. While it would not make sense to implement all of the solutions described here, the toolbox is meant to display the wide range of choices that exist in creating a better, more welcoming downtown. The toolbox is divided into three sections: Physical Improvements address problems in Chelsea that can be addressed changing the public physical attributes of the project area, Policy Tools describes how different issues can be addressed through creative policy options, and Business Solutions describes ideas of how to improve the business climate in downtown Chelsea.

3.1 Physical Improvements

This section is designed to provide options to address issues with physical aspects of public spaces in the project area. While some problems have only one realistic solution, others have several options that will be discussed. Tools discussed in this area will be organized by what issues they seek to address, though many of them are linked and form part of a more comprehensive package. The issues that will be discussed are drawn from the recent planning history of Chelsea, as well as discussions with members of Chelsea Collaborative, community members, and public officials.

Street Programming

Traffic in downtown Chelsea can be chaotic and one has to look no further than the streets to begin to see why. Residents of Chelsea and users of the downtown both describe traffic and speeding as problems, and without adequate street markings and programming it is no mystery why this is. Though it is approximately 65 feet wide, Broadway has curbs to demarcate the sidewalk and street markings for parking, but nothing else. A similar situation can be found on Park and Hawthorne Streets, with unclear markings on the street reducing friction and creating a climate in which drivers feel freer to use the road as they please, rather than respecting traffic laws and other users.

A simple and cost effective solution to this problem is to properly mark the streets in the area, so that all users are able and encouraged to use the streets in an equitable way (Harris 2008). This includes clearly marking parking and travel lanes, as well as setting aside space for cyclists with either dedicated bike lanes or sharrows. Making these improvements is a financially efficient way of calming traffic and making the downtown area more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly. If these improvements were extended from the CSX right-of-

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1. Visual friction is a term used to discuss the slowing effect that visually enclosing a street has on traffic. For example, cars will naturally drive slower on a winding, tree-lined street than on a straight, open street because of the friction created by the trees and the shorter visibility created by the curves in the road.
way at Broadway to Mary O’Malley Park to the southwest, it would create fur-
ther cohesion between the downtown and the surrounding areas. Given the
often discussed multi-modal path and Silver Line extension projects using the
CSX right-of-way and the popularity of Mary O’Malley Park, creating this con-
nection through downtown very well might serve to increase traffic through the
area, as well as encourage alternative transportation use.

Intersections

While intersections only form part of the streetscape as a whole, they de-
serve attention as they are the locus of interaction between cars, cyclists, and
pedestrians. It is important that intersections are marked in a way that makes
it clear what type of space they are. An intersection of two streets well-fre-
quented by pedestrians should not receive the same treatment as the intersec-
tion of two main thoroughfares, and types of intersections in downtown Chel-
sea should be considered when implementing any improvements. While not all
intersections in downtown Chelsea necessarily merit immediate attention, the
intersections of Broadway with 4th Street, 3rd Street, Everett Avenue, and 2nd
Street deserve to be addressed. These intersections have been selected because
most community members cited intersections along Broadway when discussing
problem areas for traffic and pedestrians and because Broadway is home to the
most commercial activity in the area by far. These, along with any other inter-
sections that experience a large amount of pedestrian traffic along Park Street
or Hawthorne Street, should be the targets of improvements that mark them
as pedestrian areas, where cars are encouraged by the streetscape and proper
signage to yield to and respect pedestrians.

The standard treatment of intersections in dense commercial areas with
heavy pedestrian traffic is often some combination of sidewalk bump-outs,
creation of brick crosswalks or even replacing the pavement in the entire intersec-
tion with brick, and potentially raising the intersection to create a table
that forces cars to reduce their speed. This solution is generally viewed as an effective way to
calm traffic at intersections, and has been widely implemented. While effective, raised intersec-
tions, brick sidewalks, and sidewalk bump-outs are all expen-
sive (“Vertical Devices” n.d.), and all of these treatments together applied to several intersections

Figure 3-1 The intersection of Broadway and
Congress Ave. in downtown Chelsea
in downtown Chelsea would be a very expensive solution for traffic calming at the intersections. Additionally, these are a widely-used combination of tools and would do little to accent the uniqueness of Chelsea. They may even been seen as a precursor to gentrification in the neighborhood.

An alternative solution to traffic problems at these intersections would be to allow community members to paint the pavement themselves using whatever design they see fit. While this approach might be unorthodox, Seattle and Portland are two well known cities where this strategy has been successfully implemented. The advantages of such a solution are that it would calm traffic and claim the intersection in a similar way to the traditional treatment, while being more unique and less expensive than the solutions discussed above. It is also a way to address concerns with gentrification, as rather than marking the downtown as an area that is becoming more affluent, it marks it as a unique community that will use creativity to shape what goes on in public spaces. Additionally, it would give the community a more vibrant feel and address concerns of community members about the appearance of the area. Though it may not be as permanent as the traditional improvements mentioned above, this solution is much more cost effective and can be implemented on the very short term, and painted images can be updated or replaced with very little expense.

Figures 3-2, 3-3, and 3-4 (from top to bottom) show a sidewalk bump-out, a brink crosswalk, and a raised table intersection. (Sources: Urban Landscapes Blog, City of West Chicago, Transit Miami Blog)
Case Study 1: Traffic Calming with Painted Intersections

Background:

The painted intersection movement in the US was started in the mid 1990’s by architect Mark Lakeman in Portland, Oregon’s Sellwood Neighborhood. His idea was to create a common space for residents to gather around. “‘Putting the public space back where it’s supposed to be may not sound like a huge change,’ Lakeman says, ‘but it has a profound effect on the social culture...’” (Nelson 2011, 1). The decision was made to change an intersection from a space dominated by cars to a public space through the medium of paint. Inspired by the painted intersection, residents have since added other public art installations and amenities, turning the area into a truly public space (Nelson 2011). The idea of painted intersections to slow traffic and encourage community involvement quickly caught on, and the movement spread throughout Portland and beyond, to Seattle, WA and even to Los Angeles. One pamphlet distributed by the Seattle Department of Transportation encourages residents to engage in ‘intersection repair’ by listing requirements, how the approval process works, and what funding is available (Seattle.gov 2010).

Similarities for Chelsea:

One of the issues with the downtown identified in the focus group was the speed and general disorganization of the traffic flow. Residents feel uncomfortable crossing the street, and drivers are often unaware and/or heedless of crosswalks. In addition, there are no lanes designated on the street and people generally drive haphazardly, sometimes in the middle or on the sides of the road. There is a community feel to the downtown area already, but people feel unsafe after dark, and general dirtiness and blandness were cited as additional problems to the downtown area.

How it could be applied:

The first ‘intersection repair’ was a spontaneous effort by the local community, “…neighbors were complaining of noise, speeding, drugs, and abandoned cars. After a series of meetings and workshops and meetings facilitated by City Repair [Mark Lakeman], they determined to paint a sunflower in the middle of the intersection... one neighbor provided 28 gallons of paint...” (Silha 2004, 2). There was a lot of backlash from the City of Portland at first, but under pressure from the residents the city approved a new ordinance permitting the so called ‘intersection repair’ (Nelson 2011). Now that the movement has become more established, there is a method for approval and application that the City of Chelsea can follow for jump-starting its own intersection repair process.

First, Chelsea would likely have to pass its own ordinance approving of the painting, but with community support this would be possible. As part of that process, rules would have to be established on what would be permitted
for the painting. The guidelines for Seattle specify the type of paint (for added grip), the types of design, and where and what can be painted. In addition, a petition is required of the community the project is something that the community wants, with an approval requirement of 60% of local residents, and the Seattle Department of Transportation has final say over the design itself. “It can be abstract, or it can represent something, but it can’t mimic ‘official’ pavement markings… No words or logos are allowed, and there are obvious things we can’t allow, such as advertising or insensitive images” (Seattle.gov 2010). As a community organization on the downtown task force committee, the Collaborative would be well placed to spearhead such an effort, and convince the town of its viability.

Benefits:

Painted intersection initiatives in Seattle, WA and Portland, OR have already led to myriad benefits for their host communities. Traffic has been slowed, and the painted intersection itself has become a lodestone for the community, drawing people together and providing a focus point for other community businesses and art installations to spring up (Nelson 2011). Chelsea’s situation is slightly different because the project area is more a commercial than a residential district. However, painted intersections still could prove to have powerful benefits for the city and stakeholders using the downtown area.

First of all, the colorfully painted intersections will have a calming effect upon traffic, slowing it down through the intersections, and allowing more pedestrian and cyclist friendly uses of the downtown area (Silha 2004). Furthermore, the painting of the intersections themselves will provide a mechanism for community development in the area, and serve as a way to bring people together. If the painting was done in conjunction with a downtown shopping day, the whole event could serve as a mechanism for bringing people to the downtown area to shop, paint, and have fun, with positive benefits for everyone. In the end, it is about increasing personal and community expression, and while Chelsea is a city with a vibrant and colorful culture, sometimes its streets do not reflect that. The color and the community spirit that goes along with these painted intersections are good things. Parking lots and intersections become piazzas, drawing people together and encouraging the types of face to face interactions that are an important part of good community development (Silha 2004).

Figure 3-5 People painting a street in Los Angeles (Source: LA Ecovillage Blog).
Sidewalks

In addition to calming traffic, downtown Chelsea could be made much more pedestrian-friendly by addressing several issues that any sidewalk users face. These issues include: lacking grates for tree wells, excessive trash, lack of rubbish bins, inadequate lighting, and several amenities that have become dilapidated like the bus stop in front of the community college. All of these issues were mentioned by community members at the focus group, and some of them have been addressed in official plans. Improving these areas would contribute to making the area cleaner, safer, and more comfortable for all users. While there are more solutions than just capital investment to some of these problems, they will not be discussed in this section as it is devoted solely to the physical attributes of the project area.

The lack of grates for tree wells in the area presents two major problems. The more pressing of these problems is the inconvenience that they present for anyone walking on the sidewalk. When conditions are dry, the wells attract trash and are inconvenient for groups of more than two walking abreast on the sidewalk. In wet conditions, these wells become mud pits that are unsightly and even more of an inconvenience for pedestrians. In effect, the uncovered grates reduce the usable space on the sidewalks by several feet, which does little to encourage people to frequent the area. If grates were added to all tree wells along Broadway and throughout the downtown generally, the area would certainly become a much more inviting place for pedestrians. Part of the reason that trash (including cigarette butts) is simply thrown on the ground in downtown Chelsea is that there are not enough trash cans, recycling bins, and receptacles for cigarette butts on the sidewalks. While it might also be effective to impose a more severe penalty for littering, such a punishment would seem unfair if a reasonable number of the proper bins for trash, recycling, and cigarette butts were not on the streets first.

Proper lighting at night is also an issue of concern in downtown Chelsea. Residents have described feeling uncomfortable in the area once it gets dark because it is not properly lit, and with good reason; street lights are placed irregularly and are of differing type and therefore do not cast a regular light pattern. City officials and residents alike have complained of illicit activity often occurring at night. From drunkenness and drug use to graffiti, the behavioral issues that plague downtown Chelsea only escalate during the dimly-lit nights. While better street lighting will by no means correct all of the issues that exist in the project area at night, it will certainly go a long way in making nighttime users of the space feel safer and perhaps discourage blatant misbehavior.

Most community members consulted for this report described the aesthetic appearance of the downtown area as an issue, and some offered ideas for how this might be improved. These ideas ranged from redesigning and updat-
ing the bus stop in front of Bunker Hill Community College to displaying colorful banners along the streets year-round and adding flowers along the streets throughout the neighborhood. Some of the options suggested are more viable than others, but the appearance of downtown should certainly be taken into account when improving the other aspects of it. Perhaps the biggest improvement that could be made is enforcing standards for storefronts, which will be discussed in the Policy Tools section.

Negative Spaces

There are three specific areas near City Hall that seem to be magnets for street behavior that is almost unanimously described as unwanted by city officials and community members alike. These areas are the card-table area directly in front of City Hall, the triangular island on the north side of the intersections of Broadway and Hawthorne Street, and the gazebo across the intersection from the triangular island and the area that surrounds it. Especially during the warmer months, these areas attract groups of men who are a nuisance even when they are not actively making street goers feel uncomfortable by catcalling, smoking, cursing, and gambling. These behaviors are encouraged by the way that these spaces are designed. The card tables are almost completely surrounded by a low concrete barrier. Though it still allows passers-by to see into the area, it created a place where people can sit with each other in a circle against these walls and virtually create a wall around themselves with their backs. This creates an unwelcoming air in the space for potential users, and might encourage negative behaviors due to the feeling of protection and isolation for the people using the space. In the other two areas, loitering is easy because the spaces are still close to the action of the street, but there is no reason for a person to go to one of these areas unless it is to loiter. They are not designed to be places to rest, and there is no seating.

To help to create a positive inviting public space, these areas could be redesigned in a way that encourages users to make themselves a part of the public area rather than isolating themselves. For the card table area, this could mean opening the space to the sidewalk and creating a truly public space. For the other two areas, this would mean adding street appropriate street furniture or redesigning the spaces that do not allow people to simply loiter. This redesign could include replacing parts of these areas with green infrastructure which would address the desires of community members to have more green space in downtown Chelsea as well as the concern with its appearance. Any solution in the three areas might take some of the pressure of dealing with unruly loiterers in these areas off of law enforcement officers.
Figures 3-6, 3-7 Two negative spaces that often attract behaviors that bother community members like loitering.
3.2 Policy Tools

Improving Traffic Flow:
One of the issues identified in the focus group are the problems associated with traffic flow along the broadway corridor in the downtown area of Chelsea. Traffic is often chaotic; there are no clear lanes and the streets are not properly marked. It would be impossible to know which lane is a turn lane and which is not because that no lane is delineated at all, making the whole area that much more chaotic. However, it is within the power of the city government to paint proper lines and signage on the roadway, a simple act which would greatly improve the flow of traffic. The Collaborative could lobby the city or MassDoT to make sure the painting was carried out, or, in the spirit of community activism, do the painting themselves (refer to Case Study 1 for more information).

Stopping Deliveries via Broadway:
In addition to the traffic flow problems caused by the lack of painted lines and traffic signals, the Broadway corridor also has many delivery trucks stopping to make deliveries. There are 183 businesses in the downtown area, the vast majority of which are located on Broadway, and all of these businesses need regular deliveries of products. Many of these deliveries are happening from the Broadway side of the businesses, further disrupting traffic flow and adding to the chaotic feeling of the Broadway corridor. Fortunately, there are side streets for the express purpose of deliveries (Cherry St. and Division St.) The problem is how to encourage businesses to use the side streets and not inconvenience Broadway traffic. There are two policy tools for the Collaborative to use to address the problem of deliveries, the first one is to lobby the town to change the ordinances regarding when and where deliveries can take place, and limit them to either late night / early morning deliveries or limit them to deliveries along Division and Cherry Streets, or some combination thereof. The second is to go to the businesses themselves and ask them to stop or to change their behavior. This has the benefit of including the businesses in the process of improving the downtown area, and it keeps potential resentment from going over business’ heads.

Dealing with Littering:
Another major problem in the downtown area is the amount of trash on the streets and sidewalks and the amount of littering in the area. Some of this can be addressed by some of the improvements to the streetscape discussed earlier, however, there are also policy tools that can be brought to bear on the littering problem. Without better enforcement, cracking down on individual littering is probably unlikely to solve anything. Instead, the Collaborative should work with businesses and building owners in the downtown area to clean up the litter outside of their respective buildings. The theory behind this is the Broken Window theory of criminology, which states that minor disorders in a
neighborhood, for example littering and graffiti, can lead to more serious problems if left unchecked (Harcourt 1998). This leads to a cyclical problem for Chelsea: people see that the streets are dirty, which makes them more willing to throw their own trash onto the streets, which makes the streets more dirty. One way to break this cycle would be to find a way to encourage businesses to keep their own store and street fronts clean. From a policy standpoint this could be addressed several different ways. The first is to introduce a new town ordinance to encourage street cleaning, but there are fairness issues that are inherent problems with this. Why should business owners be responsible for picking up trash that is outside of their place of business and caused by people that are not necessarily even customers? A much better policy option would be to create a community led organization, possibly made up out of business owners and other community members, to do the cleaning themselves, at least until patterns of better trash behavior are more established in the local community. Such a community group could be combined for maximum effect with improvements to the streetscape and a community wide awareness raising campaign addressing the trash problem.

Encouraging Good Corporate Citizenship:

The main policy tool that we have been building towards is encouraging good corporate citizenship in the businesses in the downtown area. A lot of the problems endemic to the downtown area are ones that could be solved by business and community members themselves, if they were willing to take action. Thus, one of the most powerful policy tools available to the Collaborative is the development of a community coalition to address increasing corporate citizenship in the downtown area. If businesses could be induced to take a larger role in taking care of the downtown, many of the problems mentioned in the focus group would be lessened. To make this happen, the coalition should be made up out of local community members, civic leaders, and businesses owners. Essentially any people with a stake in the downtown area should be involved, even if it is just through use. Once formed, the coalition could advocate on behalf of downtown stakeholders to encourage better business behavior, rehabilitating businesses and making them models of good corporate citizenship. The idea of corporate citizenship has been around for several years and is a broad concept, but essentially it means that businesses should pay attention to four things. They should 1) Be profitable (fulfill their economic responsibilities), 2) Obey the law (fulfill their legal responsibilities), 3) Engage in ethical behavior (fulfill their ethical responsibilities, and 4) Give back to the community for philanthropy (fulfill their moral responsibilities) (Carroll 2003). These four facets are quite abstract, but they can be narrowed down to be useful to Chelsea, and moreover, be narrowed down so that the business in Chelsea see an appreciable benefit in doing those things and taking a larger role in the community. The first thing to do, then, is to find ways to encourage businesses to take part in the coalition and embrace its goals.
Tax Incentives for Businesses to Keep their Stores and Facades Clean:
While keeping stores and storefronts clean seems an obvious step in community development in an area like downtown Chelsea, often businesses may not have the time, money, or inclination to keep their stores and facades as clean as the other citizens of the town would prefer. Thus the Collaborative should find a way to encourage businesses to put forth the effort to keep their storefronts clean. One way to go about this is to offer tax incentives for businesses to keep their storefronts clean. This is already common practice in many Business Improvement Districts, including one in New York City where there is tax incentive for avoiding deterioration, including keeping storefronts clean and repaired so as not to impact negatively on the look of the neighborhood (Gross 2005). The full range of possibilities from similar BID strategies will be discussed in the following sections.

Solving the Loitering Problem:
Loitering is another serious problem identified in the downtown area; people in front of bars, liquor stores, and in the Chelsea Square disrupt foot traffic, harass pedestrians, and contribute to a feeling of unsafety in the downtown area. “When activity on the street gets out of hand, it feeds upon itself, further eroding informal control. That the community has ceased to care or to intervene in order to right wrongs invites outside troublemakers to join unruly insiders and creates opportunities for crime” (Skogan et al. 1999, 1). Loitering and related street crime are community problems, and must be dealt with by the community. In a residential neighborhood, it would be relatively easy to set up a neighborhood watch type of group to police the area, and it is likely that such an organization would have a small but desirable effect on crime levels (Bennett et al. 2006). However, the downtown area is mainly a commercial area without many people on the street after dark, and thus the policy solutions for loitering and other minor street crimes require more creativity in their solutions. Any community generated solution has to include stakeholders which use the Downtown. Common stakeholders include business owners and merchant organizations, resident and resident organizations, local government officials, banks and small business lenders, civic and cultural organizations, local corporations, regional planners, community development organizations, property owners and landlord organizations, artists, realtors, shoppers, police, religious institutions, social service agencies, historic preservation organizations, transportation and parking authorities, colleges and universities, architects, contractors and developers and schools and youth organizations (LISC 2006).

Issues like littering, loitering and street crime are interconnected and it makes sense to, if possible, address them all at the same time and through similar means. Bennett, Holloway and Farrington note that a community coali-
tion on the model of a neighborhood watch could address security concerns and potentially increase social cohesion in an area, “Neighborhood Watch might... lead to a reduction in crime through various methods of social control... informal social control can affect community crime through the generation of acceptable norms of behavior and by direct intervention by residents” (2006, 2). A coalition of diverse stakeholders could fulfill a number of roles and tasks, including encouraging businesses to move people along and identifying unwanted and illegal behavior to the police. A large enough group can bring additional social pressure to bear on people and businesses to make sure they adhere to accepted behavioral norms.

In Chelsea the loitering and other unwelcome street behavior feeds off the presence of liquor stores, bars, and other businesses that facilitate such undesirable uses. These businesses are best approached by a large group, in order to bring the necessary pressure to bear to make the businesses adjust their behavior and the behavior of their customers. Chelsea is by no means the first city to have problems with both liquor stores and violent street behavior, and we can learn much from other cities that have dealt with similar issues.
Case Study 2: Creating a Community Coalition to Address Alcohol Establishments
South Los Angeles (South Central), California

Background:
South Central, now South Los Angeles, CA, is a massive urban area to the south of downtown Los Angeles. It has a population of 820,000 residents in an area that is approximately 71.3 miles, and is most known for the race riots in the 1990’s, brought on by a precipitous decline of the area’s manufacturing base in the 1970’s. With the crack epidemic in the 1980’s and increased immigration, by the time the race riots happened in 1992, the area had already become a byword for urban decay (Parker, McCaffrey and Skiles 2011). Much of that was linked to alcohol and drug abuse, and in the 1990s a local non-profit organization named the Community Coalition made an attempt to clean up the streets by leveraging elements of California’s state liquor laws, focusing on closing liquor stores that refused to clean up their acts (Dawson 2004). Before the Coalition was founded, South Los Angeles was home to almost too many issues to list. It was associated with urban decay to such a degree that the whole region changed its name from South Central to South Los Angeles in the 2000’s to escape the stigma of its past. As of 2004, the area had an annual median income of $21,000, leading to a poverty rate twice as high as Los Angeles County as a whole, and three times as high as the national average. “Prior to the Coalition’s work, the area had over 700 liquor stores—more than the entire state of Rhode Island (population 1,048,319; area 1,045 square miles) or Pennsylvania (population 12,281,054; area 44,820 square miles). Poverty, gang violence, drug trafficking, and other substance abuse-related issues are among their most pressing and persistent problems” (Dawson 2004,1).

Similarities for Chelsea:
There are few geographical similarities between Chelsea and South Los Angeles. South Los Angeles has hundreds of thousands of people and covers 72 square miles, compared to Chelsea’s 35 thousand people and 2.2 square miles. However, both areas face many similar issues both demographically and socially. In 2000, the area of South Los Angeles was 55% Hispanic, and 40% African American, compared to Chelsea’s 62% Hispanic or Latino Population. And while the drug and gang violence of South Central in the 80’s and 90’s are far worse than anything Chelsea faces today, the focus on liquor stores and other places with uses contrary to business development resonate strongly with some of the problems that Chelsea is facing, especially with the liquor stores in the downtown area. Indeed, Chelsea is on a much smaller scale than South Los Angeles and any similar type of action Chelsea takes is likely to be even more effective than if it was spread over a larger population and geographic area.
How it Could be Applied:

Although the Community Coalition was concerned with and worked (and still works) toward solving all of these issues, the problems we are most focused on are how they approached alcohol abuse related situations. After a door to door survey of 30,000 residents on what they thought should be done to reduce alcohol and drug related crimes, the Coalition was surprised to find that the overwhelming response was a recommendation to reduce the number of liquor stores in the community. After identifying 24 liquor stores in the area to target, the Coalition then researched California liquor laws, distributed flyers, talked to people door to door, and held meetings with stakeholders in the area to determine the problems in the area. Next, they approached the businesses in question with a list of concerns to be addressed and methods for changing the required behavior. If the liquor store in question made the changes, then the problem was solved. Otherwise, the Coalition worked with the County of Los Angeles to remove the store’s liquor license and shut them down (Dawson 2004).

To reform the liquor stores in the area, or shut them down, Chelsea could follow a model similar to what the Community Coalition in South Los Angeles did. Instead of working to unilaterally shut liquor stores down, the Collaborative could instead establish a list of behavioral changes they would like, and work with the liquor store owners to see that those changes are implemented. Then, the Collaborative could work with city and state officials to close out businesses in non-compliance. Cleaning up and closing liquor stores won’t solve all problems of urban crime and violence. It is not a cure all, but it is a good place to begin. Out of the myriad causes of urban decline and urban decay, poverty, substance abuse, crime, and others, liquor stores and the distribution of alcoholic beverages is often the easiest place to begin (Teh 2007).

Benefits:

Chelsea is beset by fewer issues than South Central in the early 90s, and the issues that are similar are reduced in scale. Still, Chelsea residents see the same problems of urban decay and violence from substance and alcohol abuse in their city. Fortunately, studies show that reducing the number of liquor stores does reduce violence in an area.

One study in Los Angeles showed “that overall, the closing down of alcohol outlets appears to decrease property crime density around 3-4% within a 0.1 mile radius” (Teh 2007, 20). At the very least, crime is highly correlated with the availability of alcohol. A Bureau of Justice Statistics report from 1998 said that 40% of criminals report using alcohol during an offense, while 60% say they have been drinking regularly the year before the offense was committed (Teh 2007). According to a California policeman: “people purchase alcohol and consume it close by, and they become bold enough to do things they wouldn’t ordinarily do” (Cheever 2012). This is especially a problem for lower income neighborhoods, and particularly pertains to those liquor stores that sell alcohol.
in one off serving size containers. Often these liquor stores perform other services, like check cashing, and then sell the patron alcohol as part of the check cashing service (Cheever 2012).

All of these problems, the liquor stores serving one off serving size containers, the loitering, and the crime, were issues identified by Chelsea residents in our focus group, and they are issues that can be addressed through a community coalition like the one in South Los Angeles. By pressuring liquor stores (and bars) to be good corporate citizens, Chelsea residents can hopefully stop the dangerous, criminal, and delinquent behavior that is pervasive within the downtown area. In addition, they can do this without arbitrarily shutting down businesses, a practice which could potentially hinder the type of community development the Collaborative encourages.
3.3 Business Solutions

One of the aims of the focus group we conducted was identifying business related concerns and solutions and reviewed projects for goals of economic development. Unfortunately, due to a storm on the night of the focus group, the expected members from the business community did not attend. This forced us to reevaluate how we would approach the formulation of our economic toolbox. Ultimately, we decided that economic and business development tools were too valuable to omit. Therefore, we created the economic toolbox as review of some of the economic tools available generally, along with how they might be applied to Chelsea. The tools are separated into four sections, an overview of the strategies available for small scale economic development, how they might be implemented and who they might be implemented by, funding sources available for implementation, and what some of the implications are of implementing the chosen strategies.

The first section concerns the small scale economic development strategies we deemed appropriate for downtown Chelsea through literature addressing cities facing similar problems. The section addresses the tools, goals, implementation processes, and implications of the applications of business assistance, cluster development and business improvement district formation.

Small Scale Economic Development Strategies

This section discusses three strategies of small scale economic development. There is a brief definition of the strategy followed by a discussion of applications to Downtown Chelsea businesses.

An environment that fosters business development has the following qualities: 1) the city employs resources to assist businesses, 2) there are institutions that delineate the process a business goes through to open a new location or expand an old one, and 3) these same institutions also collect the opinions of businesses when developing plans for commercial district improvements (Christiansen, Stitely and Hoyt 2010). The literature suggests that commercial district revitalization is achieved by locally coordinated business assistance such as neighborhood capital accumulation and business venture support (Muske and Woods 2004; 2010; Weiwel, Teitz and Giloth 2012). The benefits of local business development include the multiplier effect of the profits generated by the business owner, creation of jobs and leadership activities of business owners (ibid).

Dr. Lorlene Hoyt has coined the term “forgotten cities” to address relatively small and poor post industrial cities when discussing commercial district

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1. Muske and Woods (2004) define the multiplier effect as a portion of a dollar spent in the economy to cause the accumulation of another portion of the dollars generated by the economy.
revitalization. These cities had a population exceeding 5,000 by 1800, a population between 15,000 and 150,000 residents, and have a median household income less than $35,000 per year (Hoyt and Leroux 2007). With median household income of $43,155, population of 51,177 (US Census 2010) Chelsea cannot properly be called a “forgotten city”. However, a 23.3% poverty rate and 3% increase in vacant housing units between 2000 and 2010, indicate that Chelsea’s need of assistance is similar to those of forgotten cities (ibid).

Based on the experiences of the “forgotten city” of Camden, NJ, Hoyt and Leroux created a guide to discuss strengthening local economies through small business assistance (2007). Between 1993 and 2008 small businesses created 64% of 22.5 million jobs in the US economy and they account for 44% of the private economy payroll. Based on the data collected on Chelsea city for the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) of the 2007 Economic Census, all businesses, most importantly those that qualify as the common urban commercial district businesses by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) are designated as small businesses.

One of the benefits from local small businesses is the multiplier effect. Such businesses reduce the amount of funds that leave the economy by creating opportunities for people to shop at local businesses. Hoyt and Leroux identify a link between increased wealth and local employment (2007). By increasing commercial corridor activity, the multiplier effect can be furthered to improve storefronts, business owners could be mobilized to work as their own security force, and tax revenue for the city can increase (ibid).

Small Business Development Assistance:
Hoyt and Leroux identify a link between increased tax revenue and quality of life. Currently, Chelsea city businesses pay an average of $2,155 in property taxes compared to an average of $3,344 in surrounding cities. The total funds to be raised from property taxes for the year 2013 is $41.2 million and up to 75% of this burden falls on businesses. The city does not distinguish between businesses and investors; they only distinguish between residents and businesses (Ash 2012). This not only prevents the use of legislation to curb absentee landlord activity, but it also disincentivizes voluntary leadership such as event sponsorship, neighborhood clean up and crime reduction efforts by local business and property owners. There is much to be gained from revitalizing the downtown Chelsea business community, and in order to further that, we propose our first strategy, small business development assistance.

Muske and Woods conducted a study on a rural town in Oklahoma with problems similar to Chelsea and Camden such as a small market with uniform businesses, low levels of human capital, and lack of support through conventional capital institutions (2004). This study identified the market needs of emerging and existing small businesses as marketing assistance and financial
assistance. The approaches to business assistance that they have identified view the regional planner as a coordinator and facilitator of this strategy. They promote the use of different tools to assist the varying stages (such as emerging, existing and mature) of the businesses addressed. For emerging businesses, they argue for incubators where space, consulting, and capital equipment are shared with others at the same stage thereby allowing for lower costs. They have also argued for the development of strong infrastructures, financial instruments such as tax breaks, grants and loans, firm centric ordinances, networking opportunities, and long term entrepreneurial education as tools to retain, attract and create businesses.

In the event of successful small business development assistance, Hoyt and Leroux (2007) believe that housing developments will be complemented by the potential of the downtown to attract residents. As several housing projects have recently been completed and several more are in progress, downtown Chelsea is a prime candidate to offer complementary economic opportunities.

Cluster Development:
Another economic development strategy, Cluster development, entails the generation or expansion of the functions of a location to enhance its attributes in attracting and retaining businesses that perform integrated functions (ICIC 2011). This strategy has been on the agenda of planners since the late 1970s and mixed success rates have been reported (Markusen 2004). Industrial targeting has been successful when citywide foreclosures were prevented and they have been failures when industries became obsolete (ibid.).

In a 2011 article, the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) discussed how cluster development could be the solution to inner city2-blight. In this article, they divided clusters into traded clusters and local clusters. Local clusters were defined as integrated networks of firms that had relatively low employment criteria (requirements for high school diplomas versus college degrees) and produced goods and services that fit the demand of the neighborhood economy. They promoted the potential of local clusters in producing a higher quality of life for inner city residents through employment and real wage increases. Industries such as retail, services (ex. Health, Commercial) and hospitality were identified as local clusters which they state account for 64 million jobs nationwide. Traded clusters were defined as an integrated networks of firms in innovation and finance industries whose financial performance impacts the global economy. The goal of applying this small scale economic development strategy is to capitalize on the benefits of being located in the downtown including transportation ease, an underemployed labor supply, and proximity to significant business districts. They believe that this capitalization will lead to

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2. ICIC (2011) uses the term inner city to refer to blighted neighborhoods with high poverty and unemployment rates and low median household incomes.
increases in employment and real wages while transforming districts into production centers for increased commercial activity.

Small businesses can cluster and complement each other’s activity. Customer demand for the goods and services of one of the businesses on this chain will create competition and foster the development of another small business (Hoyt and Leroux 2007). Although NAICS data on specialty goods in Chelsea is currently unavailable, a foot survey conducted by the research team has revealed that there are several retail and restaurant establishments, which cater to the large Hispanic population in the area (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). NAICS has shown that there are 46 businesses with 781 employees that are fresh fruit and vegetable merchant wholesalers, 592 food and beverage stores with 592 employees and 19 grocery stores with 551 employees (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). Given that the top three sources of employment are in the food industry, these values indicate that Chelsea has a significant food industry local cluster.

The Main Street Approach:

A third approach to economic and business development, the Main Street approach, is used as a means of economic revitalization involving property owners, business owners and residents (LISC 2010). It was adapted as a policy for economic development by the Carter Administration and led to the development of the National Main Street Center (NMSC) (Robertson 2004). The Main Street Program was launched in 1977 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and was implemented in 31 states in 1991 (ibid.).

Robertson discusses how the structure of the Main Street approach was developed by the NMSC (2004). He argues for the widespread application of the principles of this structure which include community involvement and consensus building, improvement design and marketing, and economic diversification and restructuring. Main street programs have a variety of structures. They can be part of an organization like a Business Improvement District (BID) (LISC 2010), a community development corporation (CDC), or another economic development organization (National Trust for Historic Preservation). Warner et al. discuss BIDs as:

“...formed following a proposal by a group of property owners in a geographically defined area to fund supplemental governmental services (e.g. cleaning and maintenance), non-governmental services (e.g. landscaping, marketing and promotion), and capital investments (e.g. sidewalk widening). The municipality in which a BID is located collects the BID’s supplemental property tax assessments through its general taxation powers and distributes them to the BID. A board of directors composed of property owners, merchants, residents and public sector representatives is then given authority by the government to undertake projects and programs within the district (2002).”
Rothrock (2008) discusses case studies of BIDs and discusses the implementation of BID structure to Massachusetts. She used the “forgotten city” of York, PA as one of her case studies. In this example she discusses how the Main Street economic development mechanism is updated by merging with a newly developed BID, as common goals allow them to share costs and program the same types of activities. In all of the case studies discussed, the Chamber of Commerce played a vital role in organizing either through BID feasibility studies, event organizations, or networking.

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40O approved in 1995 regulates BIDs (Rothrock 2008). Under these regulations, the commercial district in which the BID is to be implemented must have at least 75% of the land zoned for commercial, retail or industrial use (.ibid). In addition, the BID fee cannot be more than 1% of total assessed value of real property (.ibid). In Chelsea city, the second densest city in Massachusetts, the median housing unit value is $301,900 making the maximum BID fee $3,019 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). This is $1,428 less than the fee that would be necessary in Somerville, where the median housing unit value is $447,000 (.ibid). The final aspect of these regulations inhibits proliferation of BIDs in the state. Property owners within the BID are permitted to opt out within 30 days of BID formation (Rothrock 2008).

Goals and Implementation Processes of Economic Development Strategies

This section discusses the goals of small scale economic development strategies and tools. It addresses the actors involved in the implementation process. Business assistance, cluster development and the main street approach were all designed to address problems of small neighborhoods that new development plans do not address. These strategies are realized through the creation of comprehensive plans unique to the conditions in the respective neighborhoods (Sutton 2010). These plans are then implemented through a network of resources such as community development institutions, chamber of commerce, and other organizations that facilitate economic development (.ibid).

Goals and implementation strategies for business assistance:

Sutton identifies job creation, increases of tax base, business density, sale volume and commercial occupancy as the goals of a business assistance approach to small scale economic development (2010). She divides the goals of this strategy into short term and long term. While accepting that short-term goals of business assistance can include technical assistance and streetscape improvements, she asserts that a broader scope is necessary for long term sustainability of the strategy. Based in the results of our focus group, streetscape improvements were discussed as a necessary step to increasing the customer base of downtown businesses, but we were unable to gather information about the business assistance needs of Chelsea, as the business community was unable to attend our focus group.
In order to achieve sustainable economic development, long-term goals should cater to the unique needs of local business by mitigating the impacts of zoning ordinances and updating said ordinances as necessary (Sutton 2010; Christiansen, Stitely and Hoyt 2010). By addressing business assistance through this wide scope, Sutton (2010) suggests that business retention, creation and attraction will be sustainable.

Muske and Woods (2004) discuss the potential of minority residents in urban districts. These residents bring ideas and energy from their cultures but are not always able to realize their full potential as entrepreneurs. Muske and Woods argue that the development and implementation of innovative ideas is not always affordable for minorities, which is a barrier to entrepreneurial activity. They suggest community actors should reduce these barriers by providing information about angel investors, building networks and setting up entrepreneurial workshops for small businesses.

Our focus group participants discussed how potential entrepreneur members of the Hispanic community of Chelsea face the barrier of an already established and limited variety set of cultural businesses. The participants discussed that the existing high concentration of businesses like hair salons and Hispanic restaurants prevented other entrepreneurs from opening similar types of businesses. In addition, the high concentration and limited variety of businesses in the area serves as a barrier to entrepreneurs starting different kinds of businesses. This is a consequence of the low commercial unit vacancy in the downtown area. There is not enough space to promote a free market environment where a new business in the same industry, or an innovative business in a different industry, would eventually increase competitiveness and cause businesses to improve to attract customers.

The focus group also included a story about how one entrepreneur wanted to open a restaurant with a limited liquor license but was unable to as the city bundled licenses, which made it too expensive. This is a prime example of how costs of innovation outweigh the benefits of diverse entrepreneurial activity. Christiansen, Stitely and Hoyt (2010) find that institutional actors cause such challenges. They believe that a lack of awareness amongst minority business owners of funding and other resources, a lack of experience in running a business, and a lack of city resources employed to foster an environment where businesses can develop, are all caused by malfunctioning institutions.

One example of an institution that has been active in business assistance is the local chamber of commerce, despite a lack of business membership. In downtown Chelsea there are 183 businesses, but only 16.4% of these businesses are members of the Chamber of Commerce. 15.3% of member businesses are located on Broadway. While this institution has limited authority and is not nationally accredited, it has the resources to organize seminars and events such
as Celebrate Chelsea Day and Christmas at the Polish American Veterans Center.

Goals and Implementation Strategies for Cluster Development:

Traded cluster development is critiqued due to the lack of risk aversion of attracting an industry, which is easily impacted by the market (Motoyama 2008). As such, aiming for local cluster development through cultivating relationships between existing businesses would reduce transaction costs such as market risk and capital accumulation costs. In Chelsea, this might be local cluster development of Hispanic restaurants which could be facilitated by Hispanic specialty goods stores and Hispanic grocery stores. Through this, they can behave as a vertically integrated firm where the costs of acquiring goods for production will have been minimized through transportation cost reductions (Arrow 1969).

Goals and Implementation Strategies for the Main Street approach:

Robertson discusses that the original goal of the Main Street approach was preserving historic, underutilized buildings in commercial corridors (2004). As BID formation proliferated, the goal became the use of a public-private partnerships to address areas that local government plans have been insufficient in serving (Davies 1997). These areas include sanitation, business assistance through information provision for marketing, advertising and financing, streetscape decorations for holidays, and crime prevention through private security (.ibid). In line with this discussion, our focus group participants identified concerns about businesses facilitating loitering, displays of unwanted street behavior, cleanliness and security. In discussing security concerns, they mentioned how the police were not sufficient in addressing problems such as public drunkenness and how existing laws such as those governing traffic flow were not adequately enforced.

Loukaitou-Sideris discusses the problems of inner city commercial corridors (2000). These include low rates of business formation and retention of existing businesses characterized by limited variety and small scale activity. She suggests that these firms lack marketing skill and that the business environment is made worse by high crime rates, poor street infrastructure, and an inner city customer base. While we were unable to gather input from the business community about impediments to business diversification, some participants in our focus group defended the existence of discount stores that catered to the interests of Chelsea residents. They expressed desire for Downtown developments to maintain their capacity for serving the residents of the area.

Given the condition of the inner city, realizing small scale economic development relies on the coordination abilities of planners (Markusen 2004; Robertson 2004; Sutton 2010). Planners are responsible for coordinating the stakeholders suggested by LISC (2006) involved in such strategies.
Robertson assumes that the city planner and the board of the Main Street approach implementation organization share the same interests regarding land use ordinances, designs for improvement and economic development (2004). Through use of their training, the planner is in an ideal position to facilitate effective restructuring (.ibid). In this scenario, the planner facilitates the attainment of goals related to historic preservation, streetscape design, and ordinance innovation. The implementation process here requires a trusting relationship between the city and local businesses. This may not be the case in downtown Chelsea, where businesses are reported to condone criminal activity and authoritative organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce do not have high membership rates.

In contrast to the assumption where the local government and planners share the same interests, Rothrock discusses the Springfield, MA BID where the lack of awareness of businesses regarding the opt-out clause of MA General Law Chapter 400 caused dissent by businesses in further stages (2008). The planner was thought to have deceived businesses into thinking they could opt out if they were dissatisfied with the BID at any time within a three year scope (.ibid). This was not true as “property owners signing the petition who do not opt-out after 30 days, are members of the BID permanently, unless the BID dissolves or the property is transferred” (.ibid). Although the deception was blamed on BID planner, the public-private partnership in this“forgotten city” was viewed as an extension of the activity of the city government, which business owners did not trust (.ibid).

The long term goals of accessibility of information and capital of the business assistance strategy require a persistent and coordinated effort (Sutton 2010). To implement small scale economic development strategies, the LISC reported entitled “Commercial Revitalization Planning Guide” suggests the establishment of an organization within a leading CDC, which creates a coordinated effort to address commercial revitalization (2006). In contrast, cluster development strategies view the firm as the facilitator of economic development (Motoyama 2008). Additionally, small business assistance is justified as a mechanism to create community leaders through creating successful businesses (Christiansen, Stitely and Hoyt 2010).

Outside Resources

This next section addresses methods of funding community economic development through the nationally active private sector community development financier, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the government’s Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI). As valuable as some of these business development strategies can be, they do not occur of their own accord, nor do they happen in a vacuum. They require a driving force behind them, and part of that force is the capital required to make them happen.
Aware of the blight in American downtowns, LISC identifies storefront improvement, real estate development, crime prevention, business support, business attraction, community festivals, promotional material production, and streetscape improvements as the components of a comprehensive commercial revitalization program (2006). LISC and National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (NMSI) created the LISC Center for Commercial Revitalization as a pilot program placing local CDC’s as leaders of commercial revitalization efforts. Under this program, training and technical assistance were provided to local LISC and CDC employees regarding financial resources and networking (.ibid). The program justifies electing CDCs as lead agencies in commercial revitalization as they are able to receive grant funds through their tax exempt 501 (c) 3 organization status, have trusted track records and are able to coordinate businesses, acquire business loans, organize events and street beautification efforts (.ibid). The program recommends the formation of a community initiated, market oriented, comprehensive, collaborative, diverse, vision oriented, and capital-intensive program with long-term sustainability goals (.ibid). This would be implemented through the creation of a committee under the auspices of leading CDCs (.ibid).

Benjamin, Rubin and Zielenbach (2012) (BRZ) discuss CDFI as an avenue for funding economic development projects. Established by the Clinton Administration in 1994, CDFI aim to increase capital in underserved areas. The current track record of this government initiative includes $775 million to certified institutions such as community development banks, credit unions, loan funds and venture capital funds and $1 billion as direct investments. BRZ categorize the financing provided by CDFI as predevelopment, construction and working capital and claim that these categories of financing are more accessible to the projects of non-profits in comparison to the financing tools of conventional capital institutions (2012). Frisch and Servon (2006) discuss CDFI as institutions financing community development initiatives. Examples of CDFI funded projects include microenterprise development organizations, community development loan funds, community development credit unions and community development venture capital funds (.ibid). CDFI’s are seen as beneficial to neighborhoods because they provide alternatives to check cashing shops, pawnshops and other predatory lenders, which our foot survey has identified as a common type of business in downtown Chelsea (.ibid).

Implications of Small Scale Economic Development Strategies

This section discusses the limitations of the implementation processes in achieving the goals of small scale economic development tools and strategies.

Implications and Limitations for Business Assistance:

The lack of causal connection between business assistance strategies and economic development is an important limitation of this strategy. In other
words, it might be difficult to tell if the economic development has been suc-
cessful as a result of business assistance strategies or for some other unknown
reason. Because of this lack of causality, it is difficult to decide what business
strategy to use in the first place. For example, occupational targeting can have
better results in areas where cluster development is recommended. Finally, pub-
lic-private partnerships and boards as mechanisms for community involvement
can be limited in representing community interests because they can prioritize
development strategies that are not in the best interest of the community as a
whole.

Muske and Woods have identified a lack of access to financing, industry,
and human capital development opportunities as well as an abundance of com-

munity resistance as barriers to business development (2004). They have argued
that the regional planner must provide business assistance tools to move be-
yond such barriers. However, they also indicate that business assistance is not
an economic development tool with definite short run results. Problems that
could limit success in applying these tools include the out-migration of the in-
vestments made to the local economy (Markusen 2004) and the crowding out of
local demand by outside businesses (Muske and Woods 2004). Also, in discus-
ning the impacts of CDFI, BRZ (2012) believe that implying a lack of a causal con-
nnection between projects and economic development is imprecise. Markusen
(2004) asserts that the tax base is heavily burdened by development plans with
mixed track records hence the costs of cluster targeting outweigh the outcomes.

Implications and Limitations for Cluster Development:

In defending cluster development, ICIC (2011) suggests that the proxim-
ity to downtown business districts and regional customer base of the inner city
should be exploited when choosing industries to apply local cluster develop-
ment. They find that cluster development is limited to the extent regional cus-
tomer demand can be identified. They also indicate that identifying and devel-
oping clusters which have not been fully capitalized in relation to inner city
market demand are another source for cluster development applications.

Projected and existing inner city jobs can be seen as reasons for applying
cluster development initiatives. The local clusters of commercial services, logis-
tical services, education and training, industrial products for services, and food
and beverage processing have led to 1.9 million inner city jobs in 2007 (ICIC,
2011). The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the utilities, community and
civic organizations, commercial services, health services real estate construction
and development industries will produce 2.5 million inner city jobs between
2008 and 2018 (ibid.).

ICIC (2011) purports that the implementation of cluster development will
have indirect economic development impacts such as increased entrepreneurial
activity. Markusen argues that the development of human capital and opportu-
nities for entrepreneurs is vital to retaining existing industries and attracting new firms (2004). She suggests that success in human and entrepreneurial development can be reached through job training efforts with the aim of attracting businesses rather than training laborers to fit smokestack chasing schemes.

As an alternative to targeting industries, Markusen (2004) suggests that planners should emphasize local human capital development and employment as neighborhood economic development outcomes. She discusses the lack of precision in the economic development promises of cluster development while promoting occupational targeting as an alternative strategy. In the globalized economy, firms lack commitment to the occupational development of their laborers due to short term relationships between firms and laborers. Markusen argues that regional development planners should address this barrier for occupational development and create specialized laborers with versatile skill sets to attract firms instead of entire industries.

Implications and Limitations of the Main Street Approach:

Finally, public - private partnerships to realize the Main Street approach to economic development through manifestations such as BIDS can be seen as a way for wealthier parties to insulate themselves lacking local government services (Davies 1997; Sutton 2010). Other problems identified by Sutton (2010) include limitations to community development agendas and absentee landlords. In terms of community development, BIDS do not advocate for small enterprises unless this is part of the board agenda. In the event of a division of opinion between property owners and tenants, tenants are seen as subordinate to property owners. Therefore, the property owner that lives outside of the community could have their decisions implemented on a member of the community. Rupasingha, Wojan and Freshwater (1999) discuss the limitation of public - private partnerships. Their view suggests that as partnerships have been limited to community actors such as municipalities or large non-profit organizations, they have reduced the extent of community involvement.

Conclusion

Business assistance strategies, cluster development and the main street approach all could have important implications for business development in downtown Chelsea. Although each program has its pros and cons, any development program could be immensely valuable for downtown Chelsea's businesses. Unfortunately, due to timing constraints we were unable to put out a supplementary survey of the business climate in Chelsea so that we could better tailor a recommendation for the next step the Chelsea Collaborative might take. Instead, we have made that survey available to the Collaborative so that they can pursue the type business development strategy they feel Chelsea requires based on the survey results. Furthermore, in the recommendations section of our report, we discuss a mechanism that can be used to involve the
business community in the discussions of commercial revitalization. Once their input has been obtained, then the Collaborative can apply the business solutions discussed in this report as they see fit.
IV. Recommendations
Recommendations

Capital Improvements¹

Though capital improvements can only be made directly to public areas, there are several solutions that, if applied, will go a long way to making downtown Chelsea safer and more pleasant for all users. The public spaces available in downtown Chelsea are comprised almost entirely by its streets, sidewalks, and several small plazas and seating areas. The problems described earlier at length that exist in them now can be summed up in the term “undesirable uses,” i.e. that the focus group members feel that these areas are being used in ways they were not designed to be used. For example, the area near City Hall was designed to be used in many different ways, but it was not purposefully designed to be used as a place where a group can isolate itself and make passers-by feel uncomfortable. The recommendations given here are designed to encourage people to use public spaces in a pleasant and constructive way.

Street Programming

To address the problems that exist with circulation in the project area, the streets should be repainted in a way that imposes more order upon vehicular and bicycle traffic. As is shown in image 4-1 (on the following page), the current programming of Broadway does not make good use of its generous width. In the center of the street there is enough space for two lanes of traffic plus a bike lane, though without proper markings this space is not taken advantage of. Image 4-2 shows our proposal for reprogramming the street. If these changes are made, the street will become more orderly, as well as more inclusive of cyclists.

Both Park and Hawthorne Streets face a similar problem, as shown in image 4-3. Though they are more narrow than Broadway and their widths vary slightly, they still each have enough space to have one generous lane of traffic and a bike lane, as is shown in image 4-4. Though cycling infrastructure was not one of the primary concerns of community members that our team consulted, it is an amenity that downtown Chelsea currently lacks, and is a logical

¹Funding for the capital improvements discussed in this report would likely come from the city’s Capital Improvement Program. This annual program is created by representatives from the Departments of Finance, Information Technology, Planning and Developments, Public Safety, and Public Works as well as the City Manager and Deputy City Manager. Information on this program and yearly budgets for it are available through the City of Chelsea’s website.
Figure 4-1 (above) shows a street section of Broadway as it currently exists in downtown Chelsea. As can been seen, space on the street is not used in as efficiently as it could be. Figure 4-2 (below) shows a better use of this space, which includes the same capacity for cars and pedestrians with some additional space set aside for cyclists.
addition to the streetscape as it is low-cost and the space for it currently exists. Additionally, better cycling infrastructure is also an amenity that is mentioned in many of the plans made for Chelsea discussed in section 2.2. An argument could be made to attempt to fit two lanes of traffic onto Park and Hawthorne Streets instead of one lane plus a bike lane, but such a proposition is unrealistic given the need for parking and the existing sidewalks. If the markings for bike lanes are extended between the CSX right of way to the northeast and Mary O’Malley Park to the southwest, downtown Chelsea would become a natural path between what is currently the most popular park in Chelsea and a future transportation node. As discussed above, the CSX right-of-way is the site of a planned multi-modal path, and Mary O’Malley Park is the most popular park in the city. Connecting these two areas with good bike and pedestrian infrastructure will go a long way to encourage alternative transportation. Not only would this infrastructure be convenient for users of both of the multi-modal path and the park, it would also increase traffic through downtown Chelsea, reduce air pollution, and could potentially be a boon for businesses in the area.

Figure 4-3 shows a street section of Hawthorne and Park Streets as they currently exist. They do not currently make efficient use of their generous widths, much like Broadway.

This solution to the circulation problem would effectively create friction to slow down drivers and impose order on currently chaotic streets in a very cost-effective way. It does not require any comparatively expensive infrastructure improvements and is a very intuitive and simple solution to some of the problems the area faces. Coupled with the recommendations for intersection below, the streets in downtown Chelsea have the potential to become safer and even more vibrant.
Figure 4-4 shows our recommendations for Hawthorne and Park Streets. The same volume of auto and pedestrian traffic is accommodated, which infrastructure for cyclists is improved.

Cleanliness and Pedestrian Safety

While the sidewalks of Chelsea are busy, they are also often dirty and can be dangerous for people using them. We propose that several improvements are made to make the experience of pedestrians in the area much more comfortable. The first way that this can be done is to reconsider the points at which pedestrians and vehicular traffic interact. Crosswalks should be repainted, stop signs added at intersections where appropriate, and, as described above, downtown Chelsea should turn its busiest intersections into community works of art. This is a cost effective way to calm traffic at intersections as well as give the area a more vibrant appearance. These two solutions together would mark intersections as areas for pedestrians, increasing their safety and comfort.

Secondly, sidewalks should be made more usable. Making them more usable means not just making them easier to walk on, but it means making them more positive spaces in general. More lighting should be added to the whole downtown area to make it safer at night and to discourage illicit behavior on the streets. More trash and recycling bins should be added along the sidewalks to discourage littering, and signs reminding people not to litter should be added on or near these bins. All tree wells should be planted and grates should be added where they are missing to beautify the streets, discourage using the wells as trash cans, and to make walking easier. These combined solutions address many of the problems mentioned by residents as the most pressing, including the physical appearance of the area.
Figures 4-5 and 4-6 show the intersection of Broadway and Congress Ave. before and after the implementation of the recommended streetscape improvements.
Negative Spaces

There are several public areas mentioned above that attract loitering and other negative behavior. While not all of this behavior can be explained by the built environment, the built form in these areas is designed in a way that certainly does not discourage loitering if it does not actively encourage it. These areas are the card table in front of City Hall, the island between Broadway and Hawthorne Street in front of City Hall, and the gazebo and the area that surrounds it across the street from Bunker Hill Community College. We recommend that these areas be re-designed both to discourage negative behavior and as a way to address the concerns of community members about lack of green spaces in the downtown area.

We propose that the gazebo across the street from the community college be completely removed, along with the brick pavement in the triangular area in which it is located. In place of the brick, green infrastructure should be added, including trees, native species, and species that aid in stormwater management. In place of the gazebo, benches or other street furniture should be put in place that allow residents to still enjoy the area, but do not create a closed environment where people may isolate themselves from passers-by. The green space could even be surrounded by a low fence like at the plaza in front of the Chelsea Police Department. This would not only protect the area from traffic, but also signal that the area is not appropriate for children to play in given its size and proximity to busy roads.

A similar solution should be implemented on the island in front of City Hall. This area should not be used by pedestrians, as it is surrounded by roads, it is not connected to a crosswalk, and it serves very little purpose outside of directing traffic. Even so, it is sometimes used as a place to loiter out of the way of pedestrian traffic, which is not an appropriate use and has been cited by community members as a problem. Rather than being programmed with brick pavement with planters, this area should also become a small green space. As with the gazebo area, it could be an asset for managing stormwater, as well as a place several trees might be planted. As it serves no practical purpose and should not be used by pedestrians, it should also be fenced in so as to prevent misuse. Though this might seen as a waste of space, it can hardly be called that for the reasons mentioned above.

The area that houses the card tables should also be redesigned, but not in such a drastic way. This area is designed to be a place where people gather and sit together. The problem with it now is not that it is a place where people congregate, but that it becomes an isolated area when certain people use it, which is due at least partially to the way in which it is designed. To correct this, the wall that borders the sidewalk should be completely removed to open the area up to the sidewalk. After this is done, the card tables should be moved so that they are farther apart. If this is done, it will become harder for a small, dense group to monopolize the entire space and the space will become more open for other users.
Figures 4-7 and 4-8 show a before and after view of the recommendations for the island in front of City Hall on Broadway.
Downtown Revitalization Coalition

One of the most useful tools in Chelsea Collaborative’s arsenal is their ability to draw together a large and diverse group of stakeholders for effective change in downtown Chelsea. Established in 1986, Chelsea Collaborative has a strong history in community advocacy. The discussion of LISC Center for Commercial Revitalization’s Commercial Revitalization Planning Guide (2006) was outlined in section 3.3 of this report. These recommendations will address how to implement this discussion given Chelsea Collaborative’s capacity.

LISC suggests to set up a committee within an organization’s structure that generates long term and short term goals and discusses the feasibility of these goals within an implementation mechanism (2006). A coalition group of business owners, customers, and other users of the downtown area can serve as a transformative process, bringing people together and removing some of the ill feeling often caused by top-down solutions. Temporary working teams can be established using the existing resources of the Collaborative and disbanded once tasks have been completed. Table 4-1 shows committees within Chelsea Collaborative that have goals indicating a possibility to share resources with commercial revitalization efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea Citywide Tenants Association</td>
<td>Addresses renters and assists with predatory lending concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea Green Space and Recreation</td>
<td>Discusses concerns of green space, air quality, open space and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>waterfront access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Chelsea Organizers</td>
<td>Involves the youth in environmental activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea Latino Immigrant Center</td>
<td>Assists newly arrived immigrants with becoming engaged in politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>while also providing education to prevent exploitation in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea Summer Youth Employment</td>
<td>Provides employment, mentoring, character building activities to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>youth aged 14 - 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea Community Fund</td>
<td>Provides grants to neighborhood coalitions, organizations, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advocacy groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-1 shows committees within Chelsea Collaborative and their respective goals.

The resources allocated for these committees can be mobilized to address revitalization concerns. Based on the visions discussed in the focus group, this committee would address goals of storefront and streetscape improvements, crime reduction, increasing quality of life and cultural business development. These objectives would be obtained by outreach efforts to individuals discussed in the categories listed in 3.2 of this report. For Chelsea, these individuals include business and property owners and representing organizations, local government officials, banks and small business lenders, shoppers, law enforcement,
education institutions and youth.

Problems like littering, loitering, and the problem with deliveries on Broadway are behavioral issues. Any solution requires a shift in people’s behavior, but like any behavioral shift one cannot just tell people and businesses unilaterally to change their behavior. Positive and negative incentives must be created to facilitate behavioral change. Positive incentives include working with the city to create tax incentives for businesses that have clean and well repaired façades while negative incentives include increased penalties for littering, or fines for doing deliveries via Broadway. Most of the monetary incentives have to be established by the Chelsea City Government, but if a majority of businesses in the downtown area were part of a Downtown Revitalization Coalition, then that coalition could fine members according to their bylaws, or establish a way of recognizing and rewarding businesses doing good work.

To encourage the business development strategies discussed in section 3.3, the Collaborative could build a coalition, starting with their own members. The next step would be to work with other business and community members from the Downtown Task Force meeting and bring them into the coalition. However, it is important to make sure that the leading members of the coalition are all in agreement on the direction they want to take, and that they are working towards the same end. Afterwards, the coalition would need to create a plan of action, first by identifying key businesses in the community to ask to join the coalition, followed by identifying what problem businesses there are that need to be approached by the coalition and asked to change their behavior.

Business community outreach can begin by implementing the survey that was planned to be administered by the research team (Appendix 4). Data obtained should be combined with the results of the focus group to create a “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) analysis (LISC 2006). The potential strengths of a community are established physical, human and commercial elements (ibid). The weaknesses as issues that inhibit consumer interest and business success (ibid). Opportunities and threats as conditions that make it possible or impede implementing actions related to a commercial revitalization goal (ibid). Based on SWOT analysis, a market niche can be determined (ibid). In section 3.3 of this report, the local cluster development of Hispanic restaurants is discussed. This is based on a limited Retail Market Profile that indicates the concentration, revenue and employment levels of common urban commercial district businesses (Appendix 5) (ibid). An effort to include more data in this report would be beneficial to the revitalization effort. After obtaining input from the business community, this data could be used in making informed investment decisions.

As part of the drawing together of community resources, the role of the chamber of commerce in Chelsea businesses should be reconsidered. As it is
now the Chelsea Chamber of Commerce is an underutilized institution with
the capacity to organize events and raise funds to hold seminars for business
support and legal counseling (Chelsea Chamber of Commerce 2013). This in-
stitution is a member of the Northeast Regional Chamber of Commerce (ibid).
Due to language barriers and the challenges faced by businesses including the
perception that the costs of participating in workshops outweigh the benefits
(Christiansen, Stitely and Hoyt 2010), downtown Chelsea businesses have not
been active in this institution. Increased participation in the Chamber of Com-
merce would allow Chelsea Collaborative to share the burden of coordinating
and educating community members and use the resources of another commu-
nity institution.

LISC (2006), Christiansen, Stitely and Hoyt (2010), Sutton (2010) and
Loukaitou-Sideris (2000) all identify the necessity to differentiate between
short-term and long-term goals in commercial revitalization. While storefront
and streetscape improvements can be used to appease individuals who are
skeptical about the potential of the downtown Chelsea stakeholders in improv-
ing the area, employment increases, bank loan provisions and revenue increases
must be reported for businesses to experience a return on their investments
(Rothrock 2008). Long run goals of revitalization can be worked for by more
members of the community once these short run results are obtained.

Most importantly, businesses and customers in the downtown area
should be made to feel as if they are part of a community, to give a sense of
collective well being to the area. This could help immensely in cutting down on
some of the issues that the focus group identified. Chelsea does have a strong
and vibrant community, but it is not all that active in the downtown area. Peo-
ple feel unsafe, and the streets are dirty and deserted after dark. While in use
by the community, the downtown is still not part of the community, and that
is evident in the way people treat the area: trash on the streets, people dealing
drugs, and unkempt store façades. To revitalize the downtown area in a mean-
ningful way, the Collaborative should work to bring the downtown area back into
the wider Chelsea community, or bring the community to downtown area. They
should promote corporate social responsibility on the part of the businesses,
encourage wider members of the Chelsea community to be vocal about their
own rights and take responsibility for their own behavior, and leverage the city
government to change the ordinances and perform the type of policing and
incentivizing necessary to bring all disparate pieces together.

If the goal is to revitalize the downtown area without forcing people and
businesses out through gentrification, then involving the community in com-
mercial revitalization efforts is essential. By working to change behavior, the
Collaborative can help to create a downtown area that is a benefit for the com-
unity at large rather than a detriment, a source for social capital rather than a
sink. It will take time, effort, and very likely money, but if the Collaborative
can weld the disparate elements of the community together into the Downtown Revitalization Coalition and show that it can spearhead actions on the problems already identified in the downtown area, they will well on their way to revitalizing downtown Chelsea.
Bibliography:


Gaber, John and Sharon Gaber. 2007. Qualitative Analysis for Planning and Policy - Beyond the Numbers. Chicago, IL: American Planning Association.


## Appendix 1: Full Demographics Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Suffolk County</th>
<th>Massachusetts</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2010 Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Employment</td>
<td>39,543</td>
<td>38,352</td>
<td>38,583</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7,493</td>
<td>6,258</td>
<td>5,926</td>
<td>1,371</td>
<td>21.99%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household Size</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.78%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median House Value</td>
<td>$63,643</td>
<td>$56,134</td>
<td>$57,134</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>17.86%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Rent Paid</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$589</td>
<td>$598</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>16.58%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Housing Units (1,000)</td>
<td>11,008</td>
<td>10,564</td>
<td>10,621</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>4.25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant Housing Units</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8.26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant Occupied Housing Units</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1,169,030</td>
<td>1,158,795</td>
<td>1,158,795</td>
<td>10,235</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>589,041</td>
<td>587,148</td>
<td>587,148</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>580,989</td>
<td>571,647</td>
<td>571,647</td>
<td>9,342</td>
<td>1.63%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>17,412</td>
<td>17,412</td>
<td>17,412</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in Poverty</td>
<td>15,963</td>
<td>15,963</td>
<td>15,963</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Density</td>
<td>7,747</td>
<td>7,706</td>
<td>7,686</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary

- **Total Employment:** 39,543
- **Unemployed:** 7,493
- **Average Household Size:** 2.68
- **Median House Value:** $63,643
- **Median Rent Paid:** $600
- **Total Housing Units:** 11,008
- **Vacant Units:** 840
- **Vacant Occupied Units:** 142
- **Population:** 1,169,030
- **Female:** 589,041
- **Male:** 580,989
- **Hispanic or Latino:** 17,412
- **Population in Poverty:** 15,963
- **Population Density:** 7,747
- **Median Age:** 31.1
Appendix 2: Focus Group Outline

Focus Group Outline
Welcome

Introduction of UEP team

Background of our relationship with Chelsea Collaborative and purpose of research
Reminders: Request permission to record responses; Don’t need to answer any questions if you don’t want to; can leave at any time; there are no “right” answers; try not to speak at the same time and to speak clearly; we will not use your direct quotations without acquiring your permission; we will not use your names or other identifiers in our published research; please be aware that your statements are not confidential – they as will be heard by other members of the focus group.

Questions

1. Downtown/ Bellingham Square

Show map of downtown area:
Do you use the downtown area of Chelsea frequently?
Do you see yourself as a part of what goes on in the downtown area?
[Yes] What do you see as your role in the downtown?
Have you heard the term commercial revitalization before?
[Yes] What do you think it means?
[No] {show slide of what the definition is}
Have you participated in any activities to improve the downtown area?
[Yes] What? Did it work?

2. Problems in downtown Chelsea

Part 1 Poor Conditions in the Downtown
Go around room and have everyone say 1 major problem you have with the downtown area.
Follow up: Why?
Show List of Potential problems we have identified
List 5 of those problems you think are the most important
Follow up: Explain how you have come up with this list

Part 2 Businesses + Local Entrepreneurial Activity
Do you think there is a problem with Businesses in the Downtown area?
I.E. Variety, type
[Yes] Why do you see those types of businesses as a problem?
[No] Why, what is it you like about the businesses in the downtown area?

What types of barriers are faced by the local entrepreneurs and businesses of the downtown?
Show list of potential problems we have identified
   List 5 of those problems you think are the most important
   Follow Up: Explain how you have come up with this list

Are there any other problems in downtown Chelsea that you would like to talk about?

Is there anything about the downtown area that you particularly like?
   [What, Why/Why not]

3. Solutions in Chelsea

(Start by giving them background about how our research will be used by Chelsea Collaborative, and how their input could help shape a game/competition)

Do you think the problems we’ve spoken about are relevant to improving downtown Chelsea?

What is your vision for Downtown Chelsea’s future?
Appendix 3 Focus Group Handout

Focus Group Title: Downtown Chelsea Revitalization Mission
Investigator: Silas Leavitt, Brian DeChambeau, Deniz Gecim

Background and Purpose: Graduate students of the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning of Tufts University have been assigned to aide the Chelsea Collaborative in creating a route for revitalizing Downtown Chelsea. As a participant in this focus group, your role in the research is to mention the problems you identify with Chelsea and the solutions you would like to suggest for this initiative.

Procedures: The focus group will be an informal platform for you to discuss your views on the downtown for our research. The researchers expect the duration of the focus group to be 45 minutes to 1 hour. If consensus amongst the subjects is reached, the researchers will record the focus group and if anyone mentions something that contrasts current research findings, we may ask to schedule an interview with that person through Chelsea Collaborative.

Confidentiality and Risk: The research team will not quote the remarks you make in the focus group. The confidentiality and risk involved in participating in the focus group is limited to the extent other participants respect your privacy. While the research team will ask participants to limit their discussion about the focus group, the research team cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality and no risk to making public remarks about the revitalization of Downtown Chelsea. The research team has limited the topics of the focus group to put you at minimum risk. There is no expectation of harm to your rights, welfare or integrity through answering the questions in the focus group.

Withdrawal of Participation: If you do not feel like participating in the focus group, you can leave at any time. You do not have to answer all of the questions asked. You can request to retract a statement at any time. The research team would like to emphasize that your remarks will not be quoted.

Overall Impact of Participation: If you choose to participate in the research, you will enhance the extent of stakeholder involvement in the mission to revitalize Downtown Chelsea. The research team will use your remarks as a basis for further research and you will have assisted the process of formulating recommendations that best fit Chelsea. If the report that is produced as a result of this research is able to reflect a model to revitalize areas with similar problems, you will have assisted community leaders and city managers in initiating similar missions.

Contact the Research Team: For questions or concerns regarding the research, please contact Silas Leavitt at Silas.Leavitt@tufts.edu. This study has been ap-
proved by the Institutional Review Board at Tufts University, so you may contact the IRB Administrator, Lara Sloboda, by calling (617) 627-3417.

Section 1: List of problems identified in Downtown Chelsea
  - Security
  - Poor infrastructure
  - Cleanliness
  - Inconsistencies of enforcement of existing regulations
  - Unwanted street behavior
  - Run down buildings
  - Traffic [pedestrians, bikers, cars]
  - Parking
  - Open space

Section 2: List of barriers to successful business development
  - Absentee landlords
  - Lack of support from financial institutions
  - Lack of access to financing
  - Lack of access to industries
  - Lack of access to market information
  - Lack of access to human capital development opportunities
  - Lack of firm commitment to occupational development
  - Catering to an inner city customer base
  - Minority concentration
  - Lack of variety of businesses
Appendix 4 Survey for Businesses

Survey Title: Downtown Chelsea Revitalization Mission
Investigators: Silas Leavitt, Brian DeChambeau, Deniz Gecim

Background and Purpose: Graduate students of the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning of Tufts University have been assigned to aide the Chelsea Collaborative in creating a route for revitalizing Downtown Chelsea. As a respondent, your role in the research is to mention the problems you identify with Chelsea and the solutions you would like to suggest for this initiative.

Procedures: Follow the directions on the survey. Please do not write your name.

Confidentiality and Risk: The research team will not quote your responses to the survey or record your name. Your responses will allow the research team to produce a downtown revitalization plan that reflects your perspective. The research team has limited the topics of the survey to put you at minimum risk. There is no expectation of harm to your rights, welfare or integrity through answering the questions in the survey.

Withdrawal of Participation: If you do not want to respond to the survey, feel free to withdraw your consent.

Overall Impact of Participation: If you choose to participate in the research, you will enhance the extent of stakeholder involvement in the mission to revitalize Downtown Chelsea. The research team will use your remarks as a basis for further research and you will have assisted the process of formulating recommendations that best fit Chelsea. If the report that is produced as a result of this research is able to reflect a model to revitalize areas with similar problems, you will have assisted community leaders and city managers in initiating similar missions.

Contact the Research Team: For questions or concerns regarding the research, please contact Deniz Gecim at Deniz.Gecim@tufts.edu. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Tufts University, so you may contact the IRB Administrator, Lara Sloboda, by calling (617) 627-3417.

Please respond:

At present, the median household income in Chelsea is $43,155 while the Massachusetts average is $65,981. Do you think an emphasis on improving the Downtown would reduce this difference?

Yes                                              No
Have you participated in any activities to improve Downtown Chelsea?

Yes                                                               No

If yes, please provide the name of the activity and discuss whether it was effective:

Is your business affiliated with the Chelsea Chamber of Commerce?

Yes                                                               No

How would you evaluate the impact of the Chamber of Commerce?

Helpful                                                       Ineffective

If you are a member of the Chamber or believe the Chamber is helpful, discuss your experience:

Identify your greatest infrastructural concern that prevents prosperity in Downtown Chelsea:

Please rate the extent the following infrastructural problems prevent prosperity in Downtown Chelsea, by marking with an “X” where appropriate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure Problem/Scale</th>
<th>Problem Does Not Exist in Downtown Chelsea</th>
<th>Problem Exists, Has Almost No Impact</th>
<th>Problem Exists, Has Visible Impact</th>
<th>Problem Exists, Completely Prevents Prosperity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inconsistencies of Enforcement of Existing Regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unwanted Street Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Run-down Buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traffic (pedestrians, cyclists, cars)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please respond:

Do you think there is a problem with the businesses in Downtown Chelsea?

Yes  No

If yes, please provide the problem(s) and how it affects Downtown Chelsea:

If no, discuss the selling points of the Downtown:

Identify the most major barrier to business success in Downtown Chelsea:

Please rate the extent the following problems are barriers to business success in the Downtown, by marking with an “X” where appropriate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure Problem/Scale</th>
<th>Problem Does Not Exist in Downtown Chelsea OR Does Not Prevent Business Success</th>
<th>Problem Exists, Has Almost No Impact</th>
<th>Problem Exists, Has Visible Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absentee Landlords</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Support from Financial Institutions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Access to Financing Tools (Grants, Loans)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Access to Industries (Isolated Downtown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Access to Market Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Access to Human Capital Development Opportunities (i.e. Entrepreneurial Training)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Firm Commitment to Occupational Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering to Inner City Customer Base (Low Income Customers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High Vacancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Business Variety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please respond:

In addition to the problems mentioned in this survey, are there any other problems in Downtown Chelsea?

What is your vision for the future of Downtown Chelsea?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Number of payroll employees (5,000)</th>
<th>Number of businesses</th>
<th>Economic Census (Retail Sales $5,000, 2007)</th>
<th>Retail Marketplace Profile, Based on LISC Center for Commercial District Businesses with Complete Data in Economic Census 2007</th>
<th>Neighborhood Market - Retailization, Based on LISC Center for Commercial District Businesses with Complete Data in Economic Census 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1080</td>
<td>23635</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>64049 (Administrative and Support and Waste Management Services (NAICS 56))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>461 (Miscellaneous Store Retailers (NAICS 453))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14335 (Gasoline stations (NAICS 447147))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>2885</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34693 (Health &amp; Personal Care Stores (NAICS 4463))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1334</td>
<td>35141</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>348167 (Total Retail Trade (NAICS 4445))</td>
<td>443 (2003 Economic Census)</td>
<td>Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores (NAICS 4443)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8425</td>
<td>443 (2003 Economic Census)</td>
<td>Grocery Stores (NAICS 4451)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>551</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>124806 (Food &amp; Beverage Stores (NAICS 445))</td>
<td>443 (2003 Economic Census)</td>
<td>Convenience Stores (NAICS 44512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>592</td>
<td>9356</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>122048 (Electronics &amp; Appliance Stores (NAICS 4443))</td>
<td>443 (2003 Economic Census)</td>
<td>Convenience Stores (NAICS 44512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2215</td>
<td>443 (2003 Economic Census)</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage Stores (NAICS 445)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>52702</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>746430 (Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Merchant)</td>
<td>443 (2003 Economic Census)</td>
<td>Convenience Stores (NAICS 44512)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>