BIDDING ON URBANITY WITH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS:
RE-MAKING URBAN PLACES IN WASHINGTON, DC

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by
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BIDDING ON URBANITY WITH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS:  
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“The livable city,” one that offers street-level, neighborhood life, cultural and ethnic diversity as well as a broad choice of entertainment venues and businesses, has become the catch-all phrase to encapsulate the vision of city life employed to attract a class of potential urbanites who are viewed as key to maintaining and bolstering the tax-bases of fiscally strapped city governments (Florida 2002, Kearns and Philo 1993). Harnessing this competitive advantage that cities have over their suburban neighbors requires cleaning up commercial spaces and marketing images free of deterioration (Florida 2002, Philo and Kearns 1993, Holcomb 1993). Business improvement districts (BID) have become a tool to secure perceptions of safety and attractiveness for new residents, businesses, and tourists and to stimulate reinvestment in urban retail and residential development. BIDs have become key actors in planning for and managing these efforts.

BIDs privilege the rights of commercial property owners in the governance of local districts and draw artificial boundaries between the residential and commercial life of neighborhoods. Thus, their uniform application, particularly, in ethnically and economically diverse urban neighborhoods, masks struggles over neighborhood boundaries, identities, property values and rents. The following questions guide this dissertation:

- What interest-alignments underlie the wide-spread institution of place-making economic development strategies such as BIDs?
  - For whom and by whom are these urban places produced?
Whose visions of place are incorporated and whose are left out?

In order to address a specific lacuna in the literature on BIDs, this dissertation examines the BID establishment process that unfolded in one of the most ethnically and economically diverse areas in Washington, DC. In order to understand local level interest alignments that support the formation of BIDs in the context of larger economic and political processes affecting urban governance, the research is designed as a nested case study based in the extended case method, elaborated by Burawoy (1991). This design places the neighborhood case study area within the context of a shift toward entrepreneurial city governance in DC, keeping in mind the historical layering of territorial struggles that shape DC’s geographic, social and political landscape (Harvey 2005).
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Susanna Francesca Schaller received her Bachelor of Arts from Barnard College in English Literature in 1990. She went on to study Latin American Studies and Community and Regional Planning at the University of New Mexico where she was conferred the dual Master degree in 1998, earning distinction for her work on the indigenous movement in Costa Rica.
To my daughter Alessia, my creative joy

My mother Sue, ever the scholar, who opened my eyes

My husband Agustín, the bulwark, who helps me keep my equilibrium

My brother Jeremy, my kindred spirit

My father, who shaped the urban planner in me

My mother-in law, Fulvia, dearly beloved by us all
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To my father, who has shaped my understanding of urban history and form, reinforcing always the social and political processes that produce the urban places we encounter, I thank you for imbuing me with your own search for equity in planning. Finally, to my mother, who brought me to Mount Pleasant so that we would not grow up insulated from conflict but rather taught us to engage it in order to try and find ways to build bridges to further our awareness. Whether, I succeed in this, remains to be seen in the future.
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PREFACE

This dissertation project emerged during the time I was working for a Latino community development corporation (CDC) proposing a neighborhood-based business improvement district (BID) in the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area. The area is recognized as comprising two of the most economically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Washington, DC. During the initial design phase, it became quickly apparent that BID proposals due to their governance structure and imperative to carve out set boundaries could become controversial. While other studies hint at the fact that the establishment process of BIDs may not be as seamless as BID advocates make it seem, these studies do not examine the specific interest alignments and the concomitant visions of place undergirding the establishment of urban BIDs. Neither do they address the visions of place that may become suppressed or sidelined by the institutionalization of a BID. This dissertation aims to fill this gap in the literature by homing in on the neighborhood micropolitics\(^1\) of place-making in this area, specifically in relation to the establishment of a BID.

The main question that guided me throughout this project centered on identifying the interests that coalesce around place-making economic development strategies such as BIDs. I wondered, furthermore, for whom BIDs were re-making urban neighborhoods and whose visions of place were being privileged in the process.

**My relationship to the study**

I take a case study approach, employing qualitative methods, to dissect the micropolitics of the BID planning and establishment process that led to the creation of the Adams Morgan Partnership BID in 2005, over eight years after the idea was

\(^1\) Micropolitical analysis examines the interests that form during a planning process, dissecting underlying values, understandings, and the economic stake as well as political resources held by different groups affected by the outcomes of the process. Micropolitical analysis, Marcus (1999), notes is “premised on the supposition that the relative autonomy of groups….produces goal diversity based on differing interests and ideologies” (46).
initially floated. Since I believe that we bring ourselves, our background, our values systems and lived experience to the endeavor of scholarly enquiry, I acknowledge that what we describe as our findings, the conclusions we draw, are filtered through this kaleidoscope of knowledge; yet, we do use our intellect, specific training, and reasoning to come to these conclusions, thereby opening up the opportunity for cross-validation. 

Robert Stake, in his well-known book, *The Art of Case Study Research*, proffers that case study research, and by extension research grounded in qualitative data gathering methods, requires the researcher to engage the question of knowledge production. Since case study research relies on the researcher to select and filter data in order to tell a coherent story, it becomes paramount for readers to understand the researcher’s stand point. Nonetheless, while the story may be a unique one because it is told by an individual shaped by particular experiences, Stake argues that this does not preclude the ability of others to uncover an underlying rationality, thereby facilitating the process of cross validation.

Although the reality we seek is of our making, it is a collective making. We seek the well-tuned reality, one bearing up under scrutiny and challenge.

(Stake 1995, 102)

Given this stance, however, it makes sense that I explain my “positionality” within the context of this research project. Before I begin talking about the theoretical framework through which I view my questions, the structure of the research and the formal data gathering methods I employed, I will tell the story of how I came to engage in this specific research in the first place.

Until age fourteen, I grew up in Germany. On my father’s side, I am the daughter (and granddaughter) of an architect and urban planner who spent years excavating for me the histories of urban places and buildings, deciphering the many
social meanings and political perspectives as well as economic realities embodied in
the built environment. My mother, ever the teacher, scholar and committed social
activist, led me to Mount Pleasant at the age of seventeen with a detour, I must
confess, through the suburbs of Washington, DC. During the years in Germany, my
parents as participants in the student movement and neighborhood social movements
were organizing against militarism, modeling anti-authoritarian education and
confronting bulldozers threatening to tear asunder the fabric of inner city
neighborhoods in Cologne, Germany as well. These formative years without a doubt
color the lens through which I perceive life in the city and frames what I see as the
role of urban planning in shaping a city’s built environment, social relations and
economic organization as well as governance.

Yet, no path draws a straight line; and neither did mine. At the age of fourteen,
my mother, who is “American,” moved my brother and me to the US to a suburb of
DC in Montgomery County, MD. As a transplant from a city, and at the time an
ethnically diverse neighborhood,\(^2\) where at the age of six I was taking the public buses
and streetcars to school and other activities by myself, the suburbs were a shock. I felt
captive to life within a purely residential and homogenous small subdivision with no
cultural or commercial venues to explore. So when we finally moved to DC two years
later, I became an avid urbanite. Nevertheless, when my mother first took us to Mount
Pleasant to look at a house my perception had already shifted. I saw the shattered
glass on the sidewalk, the “loitering” men and the somewhat eclectic commercial
corridor; and, I felt out of place. So we moved to Cleveland Park, a white,
predominately residential neighborhood across the Park. It took a year at a DC public

\(^2\) Our neighborhood, the Agnes Viertel, an inner city neighborhood in Cologne, at the time was home to
many immigrants from Turkey, Greece and Italy (among others). Much of the neighborhood
organizing that my parents led and in which they were participants centered on immigrant rights and
recognition of the growing diversity of the German population.
high school whose student body was predominately African American but also had a fairly large group of immigrant students (with whom I took English as a Second Language) to readjust my vision.

When we returned a year later to look at Mount Pleasant, I saw an urban place, teeming with both cultural and commercial life. Yet, comments made by those white students from my high school, who lived in “Northwest” on the other side of Rock Creek Park, also construed of Mount Pleasant as “not safe.” In the 1980’s many of these students’ parents still evinced a reluctance to allow their children to visit neighborhoods across the Park. Ironically, those same students when traveling to sports events across the District line at suburban high schools faced questions like “Do people in your school deal Drugs?” or “Do you feel safe living in the city?” “Aren’t you afraid to go out?” These comments reveal the extent to which the image of Washington, DC had become conflated with being “black, urban and dangerous” and marked by negative racial stereotypes reinforced through the media (see Modan 2007). Even the old downtown business district had been branded as African American and consequently as not safe (see Gale 1987).

Yet, I remember a different DC. I remember attending poetry readings downtown at DC Space, going to political meetings at Sacred Heart Church in Mount Pleasant where Sweet Honey in the Rock and Izalco were the main attractions, listening to jazz at Café Lautrec in Adams Morgan and going to see “Go Go” – a home grown DC rhythm— at the 9:30 Club diagonally located to the Martin Luther King Jr. Library in downtown DC. Downtown, which was otherwise shut down at night became an oppositional space where adults and children experienced political poetry and where young people gathered to listen to music at night. As my brother notes, in 1980’s and early 1990’s the 9:30 Club in downtown was a hub for a network of musicians, from Go Go to Punk, which connected DC to other inner city spaces. In
our area from drummers on Dupont Circle, renowned African musicians at the Kilimanjaro in Adams Morgan to la nueva canción at Sacred Heart Church in Mount Pleasant, the music could be seen also as reflective of the growing imprint of the immigrant population on DC.

While, my fear of the city had subsided by this time, living in DC meant that one was keenly aware of the divisions of race and class that erected psychological, geographic boundaries among people that had opened up breaches in the city’s fabric. Maybe it was teenage bravado or part of a sense of safety I had developed during my early years wandering city streets in Germany, but even as official crime figures soared in DC in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, I walked the neighborhoods’ streets at every time of day and night. To my defense, I had come to know the “regulars” on the street, and both Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan had become home.

Mount Pleasant, I confess, exerts a strong influence on one’s sense of identity and seems to require of its residents a strong sense of loyalty linked to place; yet that identity is not based on a simple allegiance to the neighborhood; for the neighborhood’s identity is multi faceted depending on the vantage point from which one experiences it. At the time, I was not aware of the complexity of the neighborhoods’ social and political fabric. I was still experiencing Mount Pleasant from the stand point of a teenager and college student.

In 1990 I returned to DC after two years in Costa Rica to teach bilingual education in the DC public schools. By this time Mount Pleasant and adjacent Adams Morgan had already been described as the Barrio and had been constructed as a Latino place (Cadaval 2003). I returned only a year after civil disturbances, “riots,” had shaken the neighborhoods, but particularly the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, to the core. Mount Pleasant Street became highly identified nation-wide with these riots
(Modan 2007). This time, it was the Latino population, and especially the younger generation, who protested. The area was changing and the change wrought conflict.

Walking to work down Mount Pleasant Street, Columbia Road and then through the heart of Adams Morgan on 18th Street in 1992, I was still being greeted every morning by two elderly men sitting on the building stoop on the Southeast corner of Kalorama and 18th. “Good Morning, keep that smile on your face.” Six years later in 1998, when I worked across from that same corner, the men had disappeared. New people were moving in and old people were leaving…that was the sense on the ground.

I left the area again in 1994, only to return four years later in 1998, moving onto the same street that I had called home for 10 years. This time I returned as an economic development professional, working as a Business Program Manager for the Latino community development corporation (CDC) in the area. At this time, gentrification was accelerating in the area, and my work involved me in the complex and conflictual neighborhood politics surrounding economic development and the meanings with which diverse neighborhood constituents imbued the terms “economic development” and “revitalization.” The BID proposal, which was first floated in 1995, but not seriously pursued by the CDC until 1998, sharpened the debate around these issues. Was the area in need of “revitalization” or “economic development”? Who were envisioned as the beneficiaries? And, what did revitalization entail? Two main lines of argument emerged. Was revitalization to benefit the people, particularly the low-income residents and small businesses, already living and working in the area? Or was it to foster an environment and fashion a place that would attract investment by bringing in retail, new residents (home-owners) and visitors? Unfortunately, in the heat of the argument, these positions were often construed as being mutually
exclusive. Yet, these seemingly oppositional positions are found in neighborhoods across the country.

In my academic pursuits, I have gravitated toward problems that have required me to delve into stories. As I also have a literature background, I am partial to dissecting planning narratives in order to analyze the emergent discourses that shape social relations as well as urban policy and in effect take on material form in urban places. “Narratives” as Weber writes, “often become indistinguishable from the basic empirical identities of buildings, neighborhoods, and entire cities” (2002, 524). I employ a qualitative research design, drawing on multiple data sources in order to link the local particularities of place-based revitalization strategy in the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area, including the development of the neighborhood BID, to processes of economic restructuring, (re)shaping urban economies and urban governance.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Recent research on the creative economy identifies street-level, neighborhood life that offers cultural and ethnic diversity as well as a broad choice of entertainment venues and businesses as crucial to the renaissance of the city (Florida 2002, Kearns and Philo 1993). “The livable city” has become the catch-all phrase to encapsulate the vision of city life that can offer precisely these amenities to a class of potential urbanites who due to their economic position are viewed as key to maintaining and bolstering the tax-bases of fiscally strapped city governments. Economic development strategies designed to attract this class of consumers and residents back to the city market the convenience of an integrated built and social environment where work, play, and day to day necessities, such as shopping, can be fulfilled within a small easily accessible radius (Holcomb 1993). But, harnessing this competitive advantage traditional urban neighborhoods have over their suburban neighbors, requires cleaning up neighborhood commercial spaces and marketing place-based images free of danger, deterioration and despair in order to secure a feeling of safety and attractiveness for new residents, businesses, and tourists (Florida 2002, Philo and Kearns 1993, Holcomb 1993).

As a response to fiscal crisis and the retrenchment of public spending, city governments have turned to the non-profit and private sectors to develop these place-based improvement strategies. Business improvement districts (BID) have become an important tool to restructure urban commercial districts in order to improve perceptions of safety and cleanliness in these areas. The goal is to stimulate reinvestment in urban retail and residential development. Since their initial

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3 The literature cites public transportation, local shopping, diversity, atmosphere, and architectural elements as features that could give cities a competitive edge vis a vis suburbs.
introduction in the US in the late 1970’s, BIDs moreover have become key actors in planning for and managing urban economic development.

Since BIDs restructure local and regional power relations through the redirection of development resources, changing governance patterns and the rescaling of planning functions that BIDs entail warrant a closer examination of the micropolitics of this form of neighborhood revitalization. Micropolitical analysis requires the examination of the interest alignments that drive or hinder a planning process by investigating the underlying shared understandings held by different groups affected by the outcomes of the process as well as their differential access to economic and political resources. My thesis at the outset of this study was that BIDs, due to their governance structure and the interest alignments they encourage, privilege “elite” interests. Thus, they reinforce the conception of boundaries, functions, and meanings these groups attribute to neighborhood spaces while suppressing and displacing those of economically and politically marginalized ones. Consequently, the following questions have guided my research project:

• What interest-alignments underlie the wide-spread institution of place-making economic development strategies such as BIDs?
  o For whom and by whom are these urban places produced?
  o Whose visions of place are incorporated and whose are left out?

Business improvement districts, particularly neighborhood-based BIDs, are a relatively new, albeit rapidly spreading, phenomenon (Morcöl 2006). Consequently, their direct effects on neighborhood economies are difficult to disentangle; albeit, BID advocates, government officials and BID boards link BIDs to improved retail environments, increased investment and rising property values. Scholarly studies of

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4 By “elite” I refer to sectors of the population historically privileged and/or those who have greater access to economic and political power due to their position in the power structure.

5 See for example claims made in the Downtown DC BID’s Annual Report for 2005.
BIDs have primarily focused on identifying the forms and functions of these entities (See Mitchell 1999, Hoyt 2003, Morcöl 2006). The underlying conflicts and controversies that arise during the establishment processes of BIDs, especially neighborhood-based ones, however, have not been examined in depth. Yet, urban BIDs structure governance and access to crucial resources on the sub-municipal level within a determined geographic area.

Although often viewed as non-controversial, the uniform application of this economic development strategy, whose main focus is on place-improvement and marketing, may mask struggles over neighborhood identity, boundaries, property values and rents. This may be especially the case in economically and ethnically mixed neighborhoods, where multiple constituents and organizations – with differing levels of access to public decision-making processes and resources – hold divergent conceptions of what constitutes acceptable urban aesthetics and use of streets, parks, and building stoops (Keams and Philo 1993). In such neighborhoods, it is very often the case that constituents who are marginalized from the planning and decision-making processes are the same people, low-income residents and small business owners, for example, who are most vulnerable to the negative effects of resulting or concurrent gentrification processes. As rents and property taxes increase, some residents and businesses, who ostensibly were to benefit from revitalization activities, may be displaced from the neighborhood (Christopherson 1994, Florida 2002, Smith 2002). At the same time, it is often precisely the marketing of its “diversity” or of a particular cultural heritage on which the neighborhood’s success is built. Therefore, the investigation of BID proposals and accompanying planning processes is crucial in

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6 See Davila (2004) for an ethnographic analysis of this process in East Harlem, el Barrio, in New York City. Davila draws a distinction between ethnicity as it is experienced and negotiated by inhabitants of el Barrio and the way ethnicity is mobilized by developers, marketing professionals as well as public officials to underwrite the “revitalization” of el Barrio.
order to bring to the forefront the multiple claims to neighborhood spaces that
different communities place on a geographic area, some of which may run counter to
the potential place-making strategies of the BID.

In order to address a specific lacuna in the literature on BIDs, namely the
contours of the conflicts that surround their establishment in ethnically and
economically diverse neighborhoods, this dissertation examines the BID establishment
process that unfolded in one of the most ethnically and economically diverse areas in
Washington, DC. Additionally, because I intended to understand local level interest
alignments that support the formation of BIDs in the context of larger economic and
political processes affecting urban governance, I designed a nested case study based in
the extended case method, elaborated by Burawoy (1991). I therefore place the
neighborhood case study area of Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant within the
context of a shift toward entrepreneurial city governance in DC, keeping in mind the
historical layering of territorial struggles that shape DC’s geographic, social and
political landscape (Harvey 2005).

I chose the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant case study area for the following
reasons: 1) the municipal government in DC came to embrace the BID movement
relatively late and with some hesitancy; but, since 1996, BIDs are a rapidly spreading
phenomenon in the city; 2) the neighborhood level study area’s geographic position
and historical patterns of development have created a borderland area of relative
demographic diversity in an otherwise divided and starkly segregated city; thereby
offering a site where understandings of place are viewed through the lenses of
different interest groups, variously filtered by ethnic, cultural and class identities; 3) in
1999 the proposed Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant BID was framed as a
demonstration project to help develop a model for the establishment of neighborhood-
based BIDs in DC.
Analytic Lens

In order to disentangle the micropolitics of BIDs in DC, and particularly, in the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area, I lean on the notion that urban space is socially produced through a dynamic, interlocking process which entails the conjoining of power, ideologies of place, and the control and deployment of economic resources (Lefebvre 1991, Modan 2007, Mitchell 2003). The geographic contours, social relations and economic and political fortunes of cities, their urban space, from this perspective, are produced by the historical layering of a dialectic set in motion when abstract plans become translated into material form through political processes, selective economic investment and withdrawal and the day – to - day practices of individuals as well as groups of people. As such, efforts to transform or revitalize neighborhoods spaces, at the same time as they are negotiated on the local level, are obviously linked to policy shifts on the municipal, state and national levels.

The emergence of BIDs coincides with the institution of national regimes (commencing with the Reagan administration in the 1980’s) that sharply cut funding to urban areas. Additionally, policy approaches promoting privatization and devolution were accompanied by sharp criticism of the perceived inefficiencies inherent to the public sector. Consequently, concurrent economic restructuring processes in response to the failures of welfare-based policies precipitated shifts in urban governance patterns that privileged the use of market-based and consumption-oriented economic development policies (Brenner 2004, Harvey 2005, Davila 2004, Cummings 2002, McFarlane 1999). Under fiscal pressure from a tandem dynamic of out-migration and retrenchment of their public tax bases, municipal governments became increasingly entrepreneurial in searching out partners to aid with economic
development. Inter-jurisdictional competition, devolution and greater involvement of the private sector are seen as key ingredients to foster economic growth.\(^7\)

Urban space, its built environment, transportation and technological infrastructure as well as social, cultural, natural capital and accessibility are the main assets on which cities can draw to compete for investment. Consequently, city governments are encouraging the creation of BIDs. In order to draw new residents, businesses and consumers to their neighborhoods and downtown districts, these have been re-imaged as new, exciting yet familiar urban places, through the selective compilation of local heritage and imagined futures. Entrepreneurial urban regimes -- that is, public-private partnership coalitions comprised of key business interests, officials of diverse government agencies, and representatives of civic associations -- are carving out territory, bounding it, and refashioning it to appeal to the sensibilities of potential investors.\(^8\)

BIDs are used to recruit a key interest group, namely commercial property owners, to invest their resources in the urban districts where they are located. Through a self-managed assessment on the land-bound business sector that holds a capital interest in place, BIDs ensure a stable, institutionalized source of funding for targeted reinvestment (Imbroscio 1997). BIDs are promoted as grass-roots level solutions to counter urban decline (Houston 1997); yet, the imperative to serve the aims of those who ostensibly pay the assessment is built into their governance structure; therefore, property owners are from the outset viewed as the rightful

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\(^7\) In a twist of irony, responsibility for neighborhood revitalization fell largely on local actors, such as community development corporations, just as large-scale public sector support for urban programs flagged. As such, demands for greater "community" control over planning and redevelopment processes were granted while public funds were declining. Consequently, the necessity to create entrepreneurial governance regimes was being pushed down not only to the city-level but also to the neighborhood level where local actors were increasingly asked to leverage funding dollars (Brenner 2004).

\(^8\) Potential residents, consumers and businesses vote with their feet and their pocket book to reveal the type of place where they want to live, play and work (Tiebout 1956).
decision-makers regarding BID functions and service areas (Justin and Goldsmith 2006, Briffault 1999, Mallet 1994). In order to be able to secure their interests and grow their investments, it follows that the majority-stakeholders of BIDs by design will ultimately want to create a district that will attract the highest payer, high-end consumers and lessees.

While the aim -- to improve cleanliness, safety, aesthetics, and infrastructure -- to support urban economic development is laudable, the underlying governance model that has devolved planning for and management of urban areas to BIDs has reframed citizens as consumers (Schaller and Modan 2005). One attending question then is whether and how this governance model and underlying notion of citizenship -- one which seems to privilege economic power-- works to support specific interest alignments to “re-make” neighborhoods.

**Focusing the Lens on Washington DC and the Case Study Area**

Washington, DC, at once the crucible of national power, has also been profoundly marked by the social inequalities that mark US society. It has been and continues to be a divided city. In Washington, DC histories of racial fears and discrimination are inextricably implicated in the production of the city's urban landscape. That DC did not gain Home Rule until 1973 is part of the story. The specific limits placed on home rule, furthermore, crippled the city from the outset; by 1995 the city's finances were in such bad shape that it was placed under the management of a financial control board. Along with cuts in federal spending, DC, like so many cities, was increasingly left to its own devices to manage its economic development and ensure solvency.

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9 The underlying public choice notion of citizenship privileges the individual rights of equal opportunity and choice over equity and socially framed rights (Mitchell 2003).
Washington's just released draft comprehensive plan (July 2006) focuses on preserving and marketing its architecturally and aesthetically significant neighborhoods. This is an initiative to link the monumental federal city through the downtown business districts to city neighborhoods in order to draw visitors onto neighborhood commercial corridors. The city has articulated the following goals to improve its fiscal position and secure its tax base: attract residents, attract retail, attract visitors, and secure property values. Furthermore, drawing on local heritage and neighborhood cultural histories, DC has focused on neighborhood improvement strategies to stabilize and “conserve” selectively targeted areas.

Although it entered the movement relatively late, DC has embraced BIDs; albeit, in the case of neighborhood-based BIDs, sometimes uneasily. BIDs, nonetheless, seem to have become the preferred strategy to consolidate a coalition among government agencies and key business sectors (developers, commercial real estate owners, and retailers) as well as representatives of civic organizations to accomplish the city’s economic development goals. DC’s evolving geography of BIDs, furthermore, suggests they will come to dominate the urban landscape particularly in target areas such as the downtown, central city and mid-city planning areas.

Both Adams Morgan, which is known as the former heart of the “Latino Barrio,” and Mount Pleasant, which has the highest concentration of Latinos in the city today, have been held up as models for integrated living. The Adams Morgan name embodies this ideal, a symbol of unity among Black and White parents organizing to integrate the schools. Yet, since the late 1970’s and accelerating in the late 1990’s, gentrification pressure has resulted in residential and commercial displacement. Consequently, conflicts have emerged as to the meanings residents,
local officials and businesses attribute to the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods, including the area’s commercial corridors.

The BID establishment process in the area, consequently, was an arduous and contentious one and required building strategic alliances as well as rethinking district boundaries in order to gain approval for a neighborhood BID in 2005. It was institutionalized as the Adams Morgan Partnership BID comprising the two main commercial corridors in Adams Morgan. Mount Pleasant and its main commercial corridor were not included. Today the BID works with the citywide revitalization initiative to promote Adams Morgan as a diverse and exciting destination location.

**Road Map**

This dissertation posits that BIDs in DC have become integrated into the city's governance coalition, taking over planning responsibility for whole areas of the city although some planners and officials within public agencies still view BIDs with reserve. The expanding geography of BIDs and the generally positive assessment of the role they play in leveraging private sector resources indicate that city agencies are letting neighborhood actors and BID organizers take the lead in resolving potential conflicts on the local level. This BID geography, nevertheless, is drawn over the “palimpsest,” as David Harvey has so aptly termed it, of “territorial struggles.” Underlying neighborhood geographies tell the stories of restrictive covenants, urban renewal, participatory planning and coalition building, the struggle for home-rule, the 1968 riots, and international immigration in response to US policies, as well as of the 1991 Latino uprisings in Mount Pleasant.

The dissertation, by way of a qualitative case study analysis, presents city- and neighborhood-level findings. In homing in on the micropolitics of the BID establishment process in the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area, I critically assess the use of BIDs in Washington, DC. BIDs in the historical context of this divided city
as is illustrated in the case study may serve to exacerbate spatial and social inequalities reinforcing contested boundaries and fragmenting the DC’s urban space into discrete economic and legally constituted funding districts. This work is structured as follows:

In chapter 2, I first provide an introduction to business improvement districts, the context in which they arose and their forms and functions. I end the chapter with a brief examination of the weaknesses inherent to the model.

Chapter 3 moves into a discussion of the rise of the entrepreneurial city, providing a theoretical framework to understand the emergence of BIDs and their rapid proliferation since the 1980’s with neoliberalization processes. I highlight three dimensions of entrepreneurial (neoliberal) urban governance: 1) the expansion and deepening of markets, 2) the work of boundaries, and 3) structuring of participation. The model is built around the concept of choice; yet, its specific use of choice by applying it to location choices made by individuals as well as businesses reframes citizenship in terms of consumer choice. This model, nonetheless, underlies the current place-making policies by providing the rationale to create municipal sub-districts that offer “class-inflected” (Smith 2002, 443) consumer specific amenities. In order to examine the production of these urban spaces and the contradictions inherent in this process, I draw on Lefebvre (1991) and scholars influenced by his work. Economic power and political power intersect with people’s imagination, material practices and experiences and combine into a spatial practice to produce specific urban places. It is not the choice of individuals, per se, that is of importance here; rather it is how individuals’ interests are structured to form group interests and corresponding spatial practices.

In chapter 4, I turn to describing the methodology that helped me organize the case study. Since my intention was to investigate the particularities of this case in reference to the macro processes shaping US urban policy, and by extension,
neighborhood spaces, I briefly explain the extended case method. Finally, the chapter
gives a description of the specific data-gathering techniques, including a detailed
account of the mapping methodology employed to bring to the surface the claims that
different interest groups make on neighborhood spaces.

As Squires and Kubrin (2004) note, in the US the intersection of race and place
has historically structured privilege. Chapter 5 accordingly investigates how racial
fears and corresponding regulations patterned investment and disinvestment in
Washington DC to create today’s so oft quoted ‘divided city’ landscape. The chapter
examines the successive regime formations that facilitated the institutionalization of
an urban regime amenable to the establishment of BIDs and their active governance
role in Washington DC. In chapter 6, I then focus on the formation of the current
entrepreneurial regime and its use of BIDs to restructure DC’s space in order to attract
not only investment but more specifically new residents.

Chapter 7 then moves to the analysis of the interest alignments as well as
institutional factors that supported the creation of a BID in Adams Morgan but not in
Mount Pleasant. I concentrate on the processes of exclusion and inclusion that the
establishment of the BID entailed. The analysis of the cleavages that emerged
revealed a dynamic by which sectors of neighborhood’s communities employed
representations of “insider” and “outsider” as well as “old-timer” and “new-comer” to
legitimate claims to neighborhood belonging.

I then turn to how different communities within the neighborhoods represent
and use neighborhood spaces in chapter 8. The chapter focuses on elucidating the
intra- and inter-community conflicts over space and the divergent ideologies of place
held by different sectors of the population in the study area. The intention is to bring to
the surface the ways in which representations articulated by city agencies, planners
and quasi-governmental marketing organizations correspond with those expressed by
neighborhood-based actors with privileged access to local political and economic power.

Chapter 9 concludes by reassessing the role of governance in defining the relationship between the market and citizenship rights. I return to a discussion of the themes that structured the analysis of the case study to a discussion of intra-community conflicts in Mount Pleasant. While the neighborhood opted out of this particular BID process, city officials, Downtown DC BID executives, and neighborhood development professionals predict that a BID in Mount Pleasant is inevitable. Thus, understanding the conflicts onto which a BID would be grafted, might also point to alternate organizational structures. I conceive of BRIDs model, which focuses particularly on expanding voice and participation to merchant and residential tenants.
CHAPTER 2

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS: DEFINITIONS AND DISCUSSION

Business Improvement Districts (BID) emerged as a creative response to city fiscal stress and abandonment. Economic restructuring, suburbanization and the proliferation of private malls contributed to the decline of many city business districts and neighborhoods, a decline precipitated also by the urban crisis of the 1960’s and 70’s. In an era when central cities were struggling to survive economically, BIDs provided an excellent mechanism to package, market, sell and, thus, restructure urban space as a cultural commodity (Zukin 1995, Mitchell 2003). BIDs in the United States originally emerged in order to solve the woes of ailing downtown business districts; they have become more recently increasingly established in neighborhood commercial districts.

BIDs are a rapidly proliferating form of urban governance.\(^{10}\) By some estimates there were over 800 BIDs in 1996 and over 1,200 in 2001 in the US (Ross and Levine 2001). Potential middle-class and upper-income residents, consumers and businesses have induced city commercial districts to compete for revenues with private malls and suburban commercial strips, often perceived to be safer and cleaner. As city officials, businesses, non profit agencies and residents of center cities struggle to boost their fiscal strength and reclaim a place in a restructured global economy, they try to forge a new image of its commercial districts, images freed of the pictures of despair, poverty and violence seized upon by the media (Mallet 1994, Christopherson 1994, Ash 1994, Zukin 1995). In order to counter this trend, businesses (real estate and retail), city governments, downtown advocates and neighborhood activists have

\(^{10}\) I will focus in this dissertation on the urban phenomenon of BIDs. Morcöl and Zimmerman, however, rightfully argue that the BID presence in suburban districts cannot be explained by the decline of inner city business districts. Instead, it is a convergence of economic restructuring and the increasing ideological hegemony of public choice theory and the concomitant creation of supportive governance regimes that contributed to the rapid proliferation of BIDs, urban and suburban ones (2006, 8).
seized on BIDs as a viable way to reinvest in the city’s infrastructure and public spaces. The aim is to selectively revitalize competitively situated local economies, unconstrained by pictures of abandonment poverty and violence (Houstoun 1997, Mitchell 1999, Mallet 1994, Hall and Hubbard 1998).

BIDs are a public/private partnership that enables local governments to encourage economic revitalization through property-based revenue collection facilitated by the government but reinvested in a geographically circumscribed space (Justin and Goldsmith 2006). They, thus, represent a particularly focused place-based development strategy. BIDs in central cities are designed to restructure public space in order to attract a specific class of consumers and residents, particularly well-to-do ones, in order to increase the local tax base (Mallet 1994, Houstoun 1997). To their advocates BIDs represent the optimal form of local government because they allow the blending of public and private sector resources to design and offer a specific set of amenities, deployed to induce consumers to “vote with their feet,” to frequent local businesses and to spend their dollars. Since the continued profitability of BID members depends on increased revenues, they market their environment to prompt lessees, consumers and new residents to relocate into the district. The presumption is that this will stimulate the real estate market and the increase of property values. This, in turn, the argument goes, serves to strengthen the local tax-base.11

**BIDs, what do they do and how do they do it?**

BIDs are created through local and / or state legislation, which determines their structure, geographic scope and functions. BIDs are variably defined. The literature generally agrees that BIDs grew out of and represent a variation of special purpose governments (Caruso and Weber 2006, Justin and Goldsmith 2006, Morcöl 2006,

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11 In their publications BIDs reinforce this proposition. The Downtown DC BID’s 2005 annual report graphically lays out the steady increase in property values not only in downtown but in the adjacent neighborhoods.
Most BIDs are established as non-profit organizations although some states have written the legislation in such a way that BIDs can be incorporated as charitable organizations, constitutionally sanctioned governmental entities and / or municipal authorities (Morcöl 2006, 2). Usually, their formation is subject to an affirmative or a negative petition process, that is to say a certain percentage of property owners, and in some municipalities, merchants have to either approve or voice their disapproval of the BID. In some states, such as New Jersey, municipalities can authorize BIDs without a petition.

While they receive both government and private funding, more importantly, BIDs have also been granted a special power to levy a mandatory district-wide property-based assessment. The fees are variably calculated; generally, they are based on formulas taking into account the square footage and / or assessed value of the individual commercial properties within the district. In some cases—this is a recent development—multi-unit residential properties are also being assessed. The mandatory fee is potentially enforceable through the placement of a lien on the property of a delinquent member. Hence, BIDs are assured a relatively secure budget. This is a key feature that separates especially neighborhood-level BIDs from other nonprofit economic development organizations, such as, for example, the community development corporations (CDC). Unhampered by funding conditionality, BIDs in this context enjoy a level of financial sustainability that may allow them a degree of autonomy not enjoyed by these other nonprofit agencies, thereby increasing their decision-making discretion as well as their ability to adhere to their board’s mission and goals.

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12 For a better understanding of the various forms BIDs take in different states see Journal of International Urban Affairs 2006 issue, see also Briffault 1999.

13 DC currently has one such district; the Mount Vernon Triangle Improvement District, which has been termed a community improvement district or CID. The University City District in its proposed expansion is also advocating for such a district in West Philadelphia.
The membership of the board of directors of BIDs is defined by the specific enabling legislation, which also determines whether directors are elected or appointed (Morcöl 2006). Nonetheless, voting power on the board of directors is generally weighted by property ownership and the assessed value of property (Mallet 1994, Briffault 1999). Most boards, depending on the class of BID, include representation of government officials, merchants, community and cultural institutions as well as residents; these collectively usually still add up to form a minority share on the board (Briffault 1999). The reasoning behind this distribution of representation goes back to the broadening legal definition of special districts, which encompasses the formation of BIDs (Justin and Goldsmith 2006). Special district funds by their legal definition must be used to accrue benefits to those who pay; therefore, restricting representation to those stakeholders is viewed as reasonable and equitable (Justin and Goldsmith 2006).

BIDs take on a range of activities; most commonly they supplement public services such as street cleaning, security, infrastructure rehabilitation, and urban design (Houstoun 1997, Mallet 1994, Mitchell 1999). They may purchase specialized trashcans, lampposts, and signage among other capital renovations. Moreover, they frequently provide a security force – often-labeled ‘good-will ambassadors’ – who patrol the streets (Mitchell 1999). BIDs take on capital improvement projects

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14 Enabling legislation is the legislation that allows municipalities to form BIDs within their legislation. This legislation is usually passed by state legislatures. In DC, it is the City Council that had to vote on the initial legislation as well as the specific law enabling each new BID; the mayor then in effect is required to approve each individual BID if the applicants adhered to the proper establishment procedure.

15 Justin and Goldsmith (2006) in their perusal of court cases challenging BIDs found that the courts have expanded the definition of special assessment districts to allow for the establishment, financing and functioning of BIDs. The supportive legal opinions that have been upheld are rooted in the argument that the assessment is deployed toward activities that ensure the benefits are accrued to the assessed properties; in New Jersey courts ruled the assessments were not a tax but fell under the rubric of special district financing because BID activities “are intended and designed to benefit particular properties and demonstrably enhance the value and / or use or function of the property” (19)
redesigning public spaces, storefronts and urban parks. They subcontract for or hire street and sidewalk cleaning services as well as security patrols. BID managers may also advocate for city ordinances establishing loitering laws and regulating the activities of street vendors (Mitchell 2003). What is most striking, however, and theoretically significant is that some BIDs are increasingly taking on planning functions, such as strategic planning and project development (Morcöl and Zimmerman 2006).

BIDs have a marked impact on the daily activities and labor conditions of the people who work, live and invest within their boundaries (Briffault 1999). To their proponents, BIDs represent an efficient way to govern and revitalize inner-city commercial districts because they create a positive synergy between publicly enabled, private financing and management of services and redevelopment projects that allows those who pay to benefit (Briffault 1999, Houstoun 1997). Since they can sanction members, who do not pay, BIDs also solve the free rider problem often experienced in voluntary efforts, such as those organized through business, civic associations and community development organizations (Briffault 1999, Houstoun 1997, Davies 1997). Consequently, BIDs are seen to resolve local problems more efficiently than local governments and these other local actors.

BIDs are designed to promote a unified aesthetics and sense of security on public streets and spaces within their geographical mandate (Briffault 1999, Mallet 1994, Monti 1999). The industry’s promotional and “how to” book explicitly lauds the ability of BIDs to refashion ailing, decaying and morally decrepit central cities to reflect “middle class norms of cleanliness and safety” (Houstoun 1997, 13; Monti 1999).

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16 See especially Davies (1997) for an extensive discussion on this.
Some Cautions

The model also has its critics. Scholars critical of the model posit that BIDs represent contemporary tendency to solve macro-political and economic problems through micro-political devices, decentralizing and privatizing responsibility for economic as well as community development (Christopherson 1994, Mallet 1994 and Zukin 1991). Lofland (1998) refers to public-private partnerships in general and BIDs in particular, as “shadow privatization” (112) and calls them a “Faustian bargain” (113). BIDs as they are currently structured and managed, she posits, limit the public democratic realm, constricting not only social rights but also political and civil rights by turning public streets and parks into monitored, controlled and sanitized spaces that limit the movement and behavior of “undesirables” through surveillance cameras, ‘good will’ ambassadors, design of public furniture and city ordinances (Lofland 1998, 213) BIDs, moreover, splinter the fabric of urban space into myriad of jurisdictional districts.

Another main critique levied against BIDs centers on the questions of public accountability, citizen participation and the normative discourses of neighborhood spaces that accompany or underlie these efforts (Christopherson 1994, Mallet 1994, Schaller 2001, Schaller and Modan 2005). Participation in this pattern of governance is structured to give voice to a restricted set of stakeholders who are able to realize their vision of space through a funding mechanism that bestows a certain level of long-term stability. Ordinarily, however, commercial tenants and residents have very little voice in the establishment and management of BIDs, thus their views are marginalized.

While some argue that further reservation of board seats for property owners on BID boards is necessary to ensure that those who pay are benefited (NYC-CCF 1997), others caution that this restriction may denote a serious constriction of
contemporary citizenship rights within the urban arena and may set a questionable precedent for other forms of improvement districts, such as residential improvement districts (Briffault 1999, Christopherson 1994, Mallet 1994). Even scholars, who are generally supportive of BIDs as a tool to revitalize urban commercial districts, caution against their use in predominately residential areas, citing the exclusionary potential of BIDs in this context, including “secession by the wealthy” (Justin and Goldsmith 2006, 37).

BIDs, while they ostensibly benefit and delegate power to a narrow set of actors, primarily commercial property owners, may also serve the economic interests of other interest groups, such as residential property owners and business owners. BIDs, therefore, may reinforce political constellations that further exclude traditionally marginalized low-income residents, small businesses and other excluded sectors in the city (Smith 1998). Consequently, examination of BIDs that center on questions of power relations directed at uncovering the nature of these urban regimes are important to shed light on the specific interest-alignments undergirding the formation and governance of BIDs (Stoker 1998). These relations are also embedded in normative discourses of development, urbanity and neighborhood space, discourses that should form part and parcel of an analysis of planning processes directed at neighborhood revitalization.

Taking a social production approach, my study argues that neighborhood BIDs exacerbate tensions over space. Consequently, I investigate BIDs as part of urban and resulting neighborhood revitalization regimes that may have the dual effect of supporting local economic revitalization initiatives through a relatively predictable funding base while also creating urban spaces that reproduce unequal socio-economic and political relations. The result may be the increasing fragmentation of the urban fabric.
The next chapter, chapter 3, turns to the theoretical literature on the entrepreneurial city and the social production of space in order to build a framework through which to analyze 1) the economic and political opportunity structures (Tarrow 1992) that facilitated the recent, rapid proliferation of BIDs in US cities in general and in Washington DC in particular, and 2) the neighborhood interest alignments and the ideologies of space that emerged in the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area. I home in on three themes as they pertain to the institutionalization of BIDs. They are: 1) privatization and the deepening of markets, 2) the work of boundaries, and 3) participation.
CHAPTER 3
ENTREPRENEURIAL CITIES: PRODUCING URBAN PLACES FOR
CONSUMER CITIZENS

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are hailed as an effective, locally-managed economic development and revitalization strategy not only for downtowns but also for residential city neighborhoods. The emergence of BIDs coincides with the growth of neoliberal policy directives that simultaneously attacked the inefficiencies of the public sector and presented privatization and devolution as necessary solutions to economic stagnation and decline (Harvey 2005). Some scholars argue that the result of this confluence of processes was the consolidation of entrepreneurial urban regimes, which have turned to public-private partnerships as mode of governance to hold and secure investment while getting things done creatively and collaboratively (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000).

What, however, characterizes entrepreneurial urban governance? Mayer (1994) and Brenner and Theodore (2002) have identified the following as markers of entrepreneurial urban economic development strategies:

- Retreat from welfare politics.
- Shift in governance, increasingly incorporating private and non-profit sector actors in planning decisions.
- Focus on spatially targeted economic development strategies to create ‘safe’ zones in the city.
- Development of large, highly visible, urban development projects (e.g. waterfront development, entertainment venues and convention centers, etc.)
- Place-marketing.

The entrepreneurial city, nonetheless, is not just the sum of its economic development strategies. Each one of these strategies, in isolation, represents little that
is new in the development repertoire of local governments. However, the more broadly defined political economic context has changed with the ascendance of neoliberalism in the US since the Reagan administration, lending new meaning and import to the strategies (Brenner and Theodore 2002). Cities have become increasingly dependent on their own capacity to generate revenues. Consequently, in an effort to competitively situate their cities and some of their neighborhoods in relation to the surrounding suburbs and/or other cities nationally as well as internationally, local governments have turned to the private real estate market to actively participate and even spearhead the process of place-making (Weber 2002, 537).

As urban regimes have redirected their attention away from redistributitional policies (Mayer 1994, Smith 2002, Brenner 2004) to privilege privatization and growth-oriented economic development, an attending discourse is mobilized to harness the support (consent) particularly of those sectors excluded from the benefits of economic prosperity, who hold the potential of becoming a disruptive fiber in the fabric of entrepreneurial governance (Jessop 1997). Consequently, entrepreneurial governance entails not just the restructuring of the city and/or its neighborhoods to appeal to potential investors, visitors and residents, but the formation of legitimacy among a broad audience, including those who might remain or become marginalized by the effects of those economic development priorities with regard to the process.

Brenner (2004) posits the need to understand the articulation of urban governance coalitions in relation to the intended urban spaces targeted as sites of specific place-making policies and argues that this deliberate restructuring of seemingly discrete geographic areas forms part and parcel of the overall project to enhance a given city’s ability to channel and hold investment, never losing sight/site
of its position within the context of national and international economic restructuring processes. Brenner (2004) identifies this process as “urban locational policy.”

What interests me here is Brenner’s finding that entrepreneurial strategies are being pushed down to the neighborhood level; thereby deliberately creating a checkerboard of circumscribed urban spaces within the urban geography (273). In order to produce competitively situated places, the entrepreneurial city then self-consciously relies on entrepreneurial communities, who can and will spearhead their own revitalization and economic development.

This chapter is divided into the following five sections. The first section delineates the analytic lens with which I examine the production of urban space by entrepreneurial governance regimes. I review Lefebvre’s conceptualization of how representations, perceptions and every day experiences of urban space are translated through the exercise of power into a process of urbanization that creates specific urban places. The next three sections dissect three dimensions implicated in the representation and production of the entrepreneurial (neoliberal) city. Section 2 contextualizes the emergence of the entrepreneurial city and discusses the increasing marketization of urban governance and by extension citizenship (Miraftab 2005). Section 3 examines how neoliberal tenets of urban governance restructure participation. In Section 4 I then turn to the work of boundaries in the production of urban places. Finally, in section 5, I turn to the micropolitics of economic development and the notion of interests. I investigate the various dimensions around which neighborhood constituents organize and that inform the construction of ideologies of place. The question is how group interests in reference to regeneration of urban spaces are constructed.

17 Although Brenner (2004) focuses here on European Union and national as well as city programs to ameliorate social exclusion, the analytical concepts are relevant to the examination of targeted districting of areas in US cities. One such tool is the Business Improvement District.
But, first let me turn to the literature on the social production of space in order to construct an analytic lens through which to examine both the constellation of interests and their attendant vision of urban space that supported the establishment of a BID in Adams Morgan as well as to surface the interest groups that were sidelined and whose visions of the neighborhood and of the commercial corridors were thus suppressed.

**The Social Production of Space**

Hall and Hubbard (1998) note that,

> examinations of how entrepreneurial culture is produced and consumed at the local level imply an important shift away from accepting the totalizing, globalised notion of urban culture toward taking a fragmented view of different cultures competing for relative dominance, seeking to reify their vision of the city. (Hall and Hubbard 1998, 312).

In their commentary, the authors imply that entrepreneurial strategies to spur economic development at the same time as they are geared at creating locally-governed, competing economic spaces, hold within them the potential to institutionalize dominant representations of urbanity, conceptions of urban aesthetics, commercial character and residential amenities.

Harvey (1989) notes, that this edifice on which the urban spectacle, that is the production of and consumption of competitive urban ‘places’, has been built is fragile; for it ignores that the fragmentation of urban space reinforces unequal, exploitative social and political relations that undergird its production. These contradictions spawn conflict and resistance (Harvey 1989, 383).

Brenner (2004), leaning on Lefebvre’s dynamic dialectical conceptualization of space, insists on the examination of specific “processes,” meaning the social, political and economic relations and resulting practices that organize into regulatory
frameworks and governance structures; these, he argues, are shaped by particular historical contexts and conjunctures and take on locally inflected contours (11). Given the focus on “process,” requires the investigation of how diverse actors, abetted and / or constrained by socio-economic, political and ideological tendencies, participate in the restructuring of governance patterns from differentiated positions of power and thus participate differentially in the production of urban spaces.

Lefebvre (1991) argues that urban spaces are shaped through the interaction of the built environment with spatial practices (actions that translate ideologies of space into material space), which are shaped by representations of space (a society's dominant systems of knowledge and evaluation, which underlie hegemonic physical and symbolic production of spaces) as well as spaces of representation (oppositional lived spaces) (cf. Schaller and Modan 2005). Through the triadic model of representations of space, spatial practices, and spaces of representation, Lefebvre sets in relation to one another a) the spaces constructed, for example, by planners in maps and surveys, b) the spaces that arise as a result of political alliances, investment patterns, zoning ordinances, technological innovations and patterns of class and ethnic social and power relations, and c) lived spaces, which can give birth to alternative, non-hegemonic cultural, political, and economic practices (Lefebvre 1991:38-39).

Lefebvre’s model, which argues that urban space is produced through the interaction of material, discursive, imaginative practices, lends itself to the analysis of the historical processes that create a particular urban space, while taking into account the structuring of urban space through macro-economic processes. The representations of space, meaning the plans and codes laid out for the development of the city, represent only an abstract creation of an imaginary place, a place conceived by individuals in places of authority whose imagination is shaped by the cultural ideological constructs of race, ethnicity and class as well as gender (McCann1999).
But for Lefebvre, this conceived “abstract space” is an instrumental space linked to the production of exchange value; it is the “space where strategies are put into effect” (Lefebvre 1991, 307).

Translating these plans into reality, however, means engaging in a power struggle, which requires economic resources, the art of persuasion and in many cases the ability to impose this dominant vision of urban space through the use of force.18 This act of translation, Lefebvre identifies as spatial practice; during this process, nonetheless, representations of space collide with oppositional representations of space. Hence, because abstract space embodies the contradictions inherent in capitalist social relations, the production of space is a dialectical process. The work of “abstract space,” Lefebvre (1991) argues, is also to organize consent from the “middle class” in order to secure the interests of the elite (309). Dominant representations of space, then, have to resonate with enough sectors of society in order to organize governance regimes with the power to legitimize plans and mobilize consent to implement them as well as with the power to sufficiently marginalize alternative visions and practices. Abstract space also holds within it the potential for violence as systems of consent and legitimacy break down as was the case in the turbulence in urban centers, for example, of the 1960’s as well as recent “riots” in the 1990’s (McCann 1999).

Neoliberalism as a theoretical framework advances market-oriented representations of space, and tenets of public choice theory have served as the foundational rationale for the ideal construct of this marketized urban space. Translating this ideal construct into practical economic and political strategies, nonetheless, has required the creative destruction of and / or reorganization of existing institutional contexts. The actions of the resulting governance partnerships structure

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18 Witness urban renewal.
the physical boundaries and social boundaries at work in urban space as well as the ability of diverse sectors of the urban population to participate in decision-making.

I focus my discussion regarding the role BIDs play in this process along the following three dimensions of entrepreneurial urban governance: 1) the extension or deepening of the market, 2) the work of boundaries, and 3) the structuring of participation.

**Extension and Deepening of the Market**

In David Harvey’s (2005) words, neoliberalism

[is] a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade…and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market (2-3).

The framework for entrepreneurial governance, then, is built on neoliberal notions that valorize private property, individual freedom of choice and competition (Jacobs 1992, Miraftab 2004, Cummings 2002). Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2005) argue that Neoliberalization processes have precipitated the rescaling of governance as “neoliberal programs have been directly ‘interiorized’ into urban policy as newly formed territorial alliances attempt to rejuvenate local economies” (12). Cities and regions increasingly see themselves exposed to economic volatility due to rapidly changing patterns of capital investment and extraction and have been inserted in “intensifying inter-locality competition” (12). Decentralization and privatization have been framed as simultaneously providing the necessary flexibility in governance to respond creatively to competitive pressures and as more reactive to citizen demands (De Leon and Denhardt 2000, 91).
Public choice theory provided the ideological underpinnings to support the decentralization and fragmentation of governance as well as the necessary redefinition of citizenship (Lowery 2000). The endorsement of decentralization is based in the precepts that the aggregation of locational choices made by individual consumers signal preference for a locality and that fragmented governance facilitates the creation of multiple local markets. This rationale, however, reframes political jurisdictions as markets; thus, decentralized governance is conflated with the functioning of market transactions. Market-based relations by extension are defined as having a democratizing effect by encouraging face to face interaction (Lowery 2000). Yet, the citizen through this formulation is defined within economic parameters as a customer or consumer not as a politically empowered member of the larger polity.

The “reinvention” of government through New Public Management strategies represented the practical application of this market-oriented political project (Osborne and Gabler 1992, Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2005). It recommended the reorganization of the public sector and decentralized governance wherein government served a “steering” function to facilitate “collective decision making to solve our problems and meet our society’s needs” (Osborne and Gabler 1991, 24). This “steering” function has recently been reframed as the responsibility to “serve” (Warner and Hefetz 2007, Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). In both articulations, however, whether government steers or serves public-private partnerships are seen as key in fostering entrepreneurial, efficient and effective governance on the municipal level. The aim is to stimulate development. Entrepreneurialism and the resultant intra-city and inter-city competition, proponents argue, “can only be good” because it “enhance[es] efficiency, growth, and social welfare by lifting all boats” (Leitner and Sheppard 2000, 299).
Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2005), Miraftab (2004 and 2005) as well as Davila (2004), however, counter that these processes of economic as well as institutional restructuring have required change in the “regulation of civil society.”

Neoliberalization has entailed the transfer of welfare responsibilities to the individual through the creation of economic opportunities, abandoning notions of societal social obligations and responsibilities as well as political rights secured through the state.¹⁹ The repertoire of programs to prevent and / or reverse social exclusion, therefore, is focused on fostering individual responsibility, expanding economic opportunities and increasing consumer choices. Welfare to work and business development programs, the increasing production and provision of public services through public-private partnerships, the restructuring of the urban housing market and education to foster private production, as well as programs to catalyze place-based entrepreneurialism are some of the policy initiatives that have characterized neoliberalization processes (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2005, Davila 2004).

My interest is to delineate the role of public-private partnerships in the restructuring of urban neighborhoods through public-private partnership governance coalitions. As these governance arrangements advance a marketized conception of urban neighborhoods and naturalize the perceived imperative to engage in inter-jurisdictional competition, they turn neighborhood spaces into places delimited by and for consumption (Blanchard et. al 1998, Miraftab 2004 and 2005).

Tourists, residents, and businesses are presumed to reveal their preference for a shopping, living or investment environment by “voting with their feet” and their

¹⁹ See Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2005), Table 2, for a schematic matrix of the interacting fields of regulation that have defined the process of neoliberalization. These include the following: Recalibration of intergovernmental relations, retrenchment of public finance, restructuring of the welfare state, privatization of the local public sector and collective infrastructures, restructuring of urban housing markets, reworking of labor relations, restructuring strategies of territorial development, transformation of the built environment and urban form, re-regulation of civil society, re-representing the city (20).
dollars; localities, in turn, compete to attract these consumer-voters. The positive potential of this argument resides in the idea that the central city can proactively compete with suburban districts to attract businesses and consumers by offering an optimal set of tax burden, services, atmosphere and urban amenities and convenience (Houstoun 1997, Briffault 1999, Lowery 2000, Tiebout 1956). The citizen, however, has been reduced to the role of client or customer whose wants and needs can be satisfied as long as he/she is willing and able to pay. This notion of citizen consumer defines both citizenship and the role of government within economic parameters. Its persuasive power, as noted, resides in its espousal of individual freedom and “choice.”

However, the assumption undergirding this rationale is that economic opportunities are structured in such a manner that individual citizens possess equivalent purchasing-power and ability to move. Scholars critical of public choice theory and inter-jurisdictional competition point out that the “mobility” as well as the purchasing power of individual consumers as well as business owners, is historically conditioned (Starr 1987, Lowery 1998 and 2000, Davila 2004). The limited notion of citizen as consumer fails to recognize that access to the market is conditioned by historical cultural, social and political modes of exclusion and inclusion rooted in race, ethnic, gender and class discrimination. Patterns of exclusion, furthermore, have prevented asset accumulation among specific groups specifically by restricting mobility, thereby purposely constraining choice (Banjeree 2001, Lowery 1998 and 2000, Kabeer 2000).

In the United States race, class and gender privileges facilitated the historical (class and social) mobility of some sectors of the populations while deliberately circumscribing the social and physical mobility of others.20 These patterns of

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exclusion have congealed into ideologies of place rooted in racialized processes of preference formation (Davila 2004); thus Lowery (2000) argues fragmentation facilitates peoples’ ability to “sort” themselves into jurisdictions not just based on their preferences for certain amenities and tax burdens but also based on their class, racial and cultural as well as gendered prejudices. Therefore, the consumer choices of one group of individuals continue to have the potential not only of violating the civil rights of another, but also to underwrite the continued enrichment of historically privileged groups (Davila 2004, Lowery 2000). Hence, when inserted into a context where historically inherited social and political hierarchies operate, this model of governance may exacerbate historical inequities and provides no means to redress them.

The penetration of market values into the public realm suppresses the recognition of public values, such as fairness, distributive justice, intergenerational dependence, access to information and voice (De Leon and Denhardt 2000 and Parker and Gould 2000). The hegemony of the neoliberal discourse (Jessop 1994) seems to have delegitimized the very words we associate with public democratic accountability and citizenship. Yet, while the neoliberal reframing of citizenship “shifts the basis of exclusion from group (racialized categories) to individual (affordability), current policy directions may in effect continue to reinforce patterns of group exclusion (Miraftab 2005, 25, See also Davila 2004, Avila 2004).

**Contradictory Work of Boundaries**

The fragmentation of urban space through the use of BIDs into identifiable and marketable districts also requires the drawing of boundaries. Boundary work, however, operates on the emotional, social and physical planes (Lan 2003). Boundaries are socially constructed to demarcate class, ethnic and racial differences

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21 See Lowery (2000) discussion on boundaries and preference formation.
and are thus employed to structure privilege and marginalization. They circumscribe access to economic opportunities and political power.

In examining the effects of boundaries in the context of inter-jurisdictional competition among suburban jurisdictions and the central city, Lowery (2000) argues that fragmentation allows the creation of privileged enclaves that insulate not only the wealthy from the poor but also facilitates the creation of racially and ethnically homogeneous places. He notes that “fragmentation does more than simply reflect and then institutionally protect preferences for separation; it engenders and then reinforces them” (Lowery 2000, 58). McFarlane (1999) forcefully underpins this argument in her analysis of place-based economic development within cities. The carving out of intra-city districts creates and hardens the “demarcation line between the affluent city and impoverished ghetto,” she posits, thereby, perpetuating geographies of inequity (353).

The mission of BIDs is to focus narrowly on the revitalization of a bounded jurisdiction within the city. They restructure the urban landscape into discrete market places where property owners and business owners ostensibly purchase the safety and cleaning services they want as well as manage the creation of the district as a product to be marketed and sold to outside consumers and investors. BIDs with their focus on creating consumption spaces consequently create an artificial boundary between the residential space of everyday life and the presumed commercial space of consumption. This is a problematic construction even in downtown areas where public spaces are not solely defined through the sum of economic interactions since they function as political, cultural and social spaces as well (Davila 2004, McCann 1999). In the case of urban neighborhoods, this dichotomous division of neighborhood space is further complicated by the predominance of residential areas, which are also important sites of social, political and cultural interaction (Katznelson 1991).
Yet, “there has been a powerful tendency to treat the local neighborhood as a discrete economic unit in need of rebuilding” (Cummings 2002, 442, emphasis added). Place-based economic development strategies designed to foster neighborhood entrepreneurialism as well as its competitive market position, furthermore, have “generally presumed the fixity of boundaries” (Cummings 2002, 442). Boundaries that are drawn to create these urban districts, however, are always drawn over pre-existing places.

Harvey (2005) concept of a palimpsest of historical territorial struggles becomes useful as a visual representation of territorially based processes of exclusion and suppression that are never complete. Past struggles and histories may be masked but they are inextricably entwined in the continual production of urban space.

Zukin (1995) notes that "linking public culture to commercial culture [has] implications for social identity and control" (19). This is particularly true in racially, ethnically and economically diverse neighborhoods where intra-group conflict is negotiated in and through a neighborhood space. Social, political and cultural boundaries are reinforced, contested and redefined through the everyday use of neighborhood spaces. Neighborhoods are sites of struggle where, for example, discourses of fear, safety, cleanliness and orderliness can be employed to construct social boundaries that impose one vision of community and place by regulating alternate practices. Those with privileged access to political and economic resources, however, often have the ability to organize decision-making processes and, therefore, gain the capacity to decide on neighborhood boundaries, on what histories of place to privilege, as well as on what uses of public and interstitial spaces are appropriate.

**Participation**

The production of urban space is also inextricably linked to how participation in governance is structured. By the end of the 1970’s the parallel emergence of
economic crises and of social movements rooted in precepts of individual freedoms and identity politics rather than social rights had created political opportunity structures to further the institution of conservative national regimes and concomitant shifts in urban governance patterns (Harvey 1989, 4, Harvey 2005, Brenner 2004).

Some scholars argue that the Fordist model, built around mass production, collective consumption and democratic welfare solidarity, which was ensured through a hierarchically organized state, faltered not only due to its inability to sustain long-term economic dynamism\(^2\) but also as a result of opposition from both the political right and left (Mayer 1994, Lipietz 1994, Brenner 2004).

Urban social movements and neighborhood activists were confronting the state in order to force the further inclusion of heretofore marginalized groups. Their demands for the decentralization and democratization of the state bureaucracy, that is for local control and community empowerment, paradoxically, echoed tenets of the conservative market-oriented neoliberal discourse that was beginning to gain ascendance (Painter 1995, 285 and Jessop 1997).

State intervention in the urban policy arena, particularly in the form of urban renewal, had come under vociferous censure from progressive community activists. Decried as technocratic, urban renewal programs were attacked as being inure to community needs. Conservatives in opposition to the concentration of power on the federal level and public spending on social programs concurrently sought to reframe urban policy. So on the one hand, urban-based movements assailed the rational-comprehensive planning model as a tool of the state, legitimizing technocratic planning processes impervious to community demands. On the other hand, economic crisis, the fracturing of civil society and the simultaneous perception of disorder

\(^{22}\) Technological change and the communication revolution bolstered globalization of trade and the simultaneous extension and deepening of markets; at the same time reorganizing territorial economic competition (Beneria 2003).
presented conservative activists the opportunity to consolidate a political strategy to capture power (Harvey 2005).

Ironically, then, by the 1980’s earlier activist demands for greater community control over planning and redevelopment processes were incorporated into conservative policy approaches. Cuts in Federal aid to cities, furthermore, were underwriting the perceived imperative to form entrepreneurial public-private partnerships at the city as well as neighborhood levels (Brenner 2004, Reed 1999, Imbroscio 2003, Cummings 2002).

Some scholars argue that the conservative political, economic and ideological movement fortuitously melded fear of (racialized) disorder, the widespread disillusionment with the public sector, and the demands for the expansion of individual rights as well as greater local decision-making power into a “practical” political discursive strategy that “emphasized the liberty of consumer choice, not only with respect to particular products but also with respect to lifestyles” (Harvey 2005, 42; Miraftab 2004, Cummings 2002). The genius of neoliberalism, then, resides in its capture and reframing of progressive notions of empowerment and participation, thereby, neutralizing redistributive group claims on the state and mobilizing consent among the middle class (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2005, Davila 2004).

Consequently, while neighborhood activists had managed to open up political spaces for the legitimation of advocacy planning and the accompanying principles of empowerment, local control and participation, these terms were co-opted by the power structure. The concept of economic justice became simultaneously sidelined and discredited by the right and by the progressive (postmodern) emphasis on multiculturalism –the recognition of and valorization of difference---, political localism and place-based intervention (Cummings 2002).
At the same time a modicum of participation is crucial to legitimize
governance coalitions. Therefore, in practice, a more extensive notion of citizenship
than the public choice one delineated above has been identified in the public
administration literature. “Mediating institutions,” such as BIDs as well as CDCs, are
viewed as an effort to embrace deliberative democracy (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000).
Yet, participation is often limited by the very structure and mission of the institutions.
The rationale defining the work of public-private partnerships created to enhance the
competitive position of specific places, for example, has conflated empowerment with
self-help and redefined participation in terms of stakeholder participation (Miraftab

BIDs are one example of a mediating institution used to foster urban
reinvestment. They offer municipal governments an apt vehicle to institutionalize
participation while at the same time securing the support of a key business interest
group, namely place-bound real estate owners (Imbroscio 1997). Designed as
management rather than democratic models of governance, BIDs then legitimize the
concept of governing through stakeholder participation.

Exempt from public sector procurement rules, BIDs are seen to operate more
efficiently and effectively. Their governance structure is intended to engage key
private sector partners in the physical restructuring of the district and the
implementation of the management and social control mechanisms necessary to
sustain the renewed landscape over the long-term. Through this partnership
arrangement BIDs serve both the aims of property owners and public sector agencies;
they help to catalyze and or secure the revalorization of the urban real estate markets,
thereby strengthening the tax base. In this manner the marketization of governance
legitimizes decentralization strategies that institutionalize notions of stakeholder
participation whereby power is channeled to specific sectors of the “community”
rather than redistributed to incorporate local actors previously marginalized from
decision-making structures and economic opportunities.

Because BIDs are structured as a non-profit corporation but with the voting
power on their board of directors usually weighted toward property owners, citizen
representation and participation is limited to those in the community who pay into the
collective pot. Ordinarily commercial and residential tenants, for example, have little
voice both in the establishment and management of BIDs. Moreover, once
established, their governing boards and their decision-making processes are not
subject to challenge by non-members (Young 2000, Briffault 1999, Mallet 1994).
One BID president states, “We control the money, we get things done, and we are
outside democratic oversight and accountability” (Times Square BID President in
Houstoun 1997, 15). BID managers are endowed with a predictable resource base
and, thus, with the autonomy and power to make things happen creatively. In this
manner the BID structure while it enhances the entrepreneurial capacity of the
manager also increases her / his discretionary power.

In effect, some scholars argue, participation in public-private partnerships,
particularly in the case of BIDs, is limited to those who are narrowly defined as direct
stakeholders in the commercial life of an area (Justin and Goldsmith 2006, Miraftab
2004 and 2005). Moreover power and voice are structured to ensure that those who
ostensibly pay for services maintain a majority vote and thus greater decision-making
power. Yet, the reality is that property owners usually pass down the BID assessment-
fee to their commercial tenants.

Mallet (1994) analyzing the use of BIDs in the US proffered strong cautions:

23 See the New York City Council’s Committee on Finance (NYC-CCF) 1997 Report for a lengthy
discussion.
24 Some states have sunset laws, under which BID legislations could theoretically be challenged. So far
this has not occurred. DC’s law sunsets in 10 years.
In complex interdependent urban environments...in urban special districts, property qualifications for voting have been abolished as a result of judicial scrutiny. Business improvement districts reverse this trend in urban areas by reinstating property based voting systems in the election of BID officials (282).

**Interest Formation: Producing Neighborhood Space**

In order to understand how the marketization of governance, the structuring participation, and the work of boundaries interact in the production of urban places, requires both the dissection of the forms and functions of the BID -- meaning its institutional structure and governance mechanisms -- and the analysis of the specific interest alignments that support the rapid proliferation of BIDs. This dual strategy sheds light on the power relations engendered and reproduced by this economic development strategy. In this section, I therefore seek to probe the specific dimensions around which specific sectors of society mobilize. These dimensions, furthermore, inform the construction of ideologies of place that are deployed to produce urban space.

Davis (1991) in his study of Cincinnati dissects the notion of “interests” in order to build a model through which to examine neighborhood politics in relation to economic development planning. Like Lefebvre, he works from a neo-Marxist perspective and examines the dialectic by which antagonistic relations interact to produce certain outcomes. Interests, he argues, are relational and emerge from society’s economic and social organization. Davis is interested in developing a framework to analyze domestic property relations in residential neighborhoods and factors in the accommodative as well as accumulative interests that people have in their property. He relates these two dimensions to tenurial status and creates the

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25 Accomodative interests are shaped by attachment to place derived through the use value an individual extracts from a specific neighborhood.
following categories: property capitalists, whose interests are accumulative, owner-occupiers, who have both accommodative as well accumulative interests, and tenants, whose interest are accommodative. Business interests, particularly those of merchants, however, are not explicitly factored into the model. Yet, for this case study it is critical to examine these interests as well since BIDs represent an economic development strategy explicitly designed to revitalize commercial corridors. Business interests can similarly be aligned along tenure status; i.e. commercial property owners holding property for accumulative purposes only, commercial property owners who are also tenants and therefore may be more closely bound to the life of a specific place, and tenants, merchants leasing their space, whose livelihood is dependant on how the local environment is structured. At the same time, the interests of merchants, who are lessees, are not necessarily structured solely by their tenure status; they are also shaped by the specific markets they target and serve. Residents and business interests are also shaped by the gendered, racialized and / or ethnic constructions of social boundaries; therefore, any given coalition of interest groups that shapes into a governance partnership is also conditioned by intersecting histories of collective ethnic, racial as well as gender identity formation (Davila 2004, Modan 2007).

Modan (2006) in her examination of neighborhood politics in Mount Pleasant, specifically drawing on Lefebvre, develops the concept of discourse communities who adhere to fairly coherent “ideologies of place.” These ideologies of place are compseed of both representations of place and experiences of place and incorporate the class, ethnic, gender and cultural positions that shaped these experiences. In urban neighborhoods discourse communities may coalesce into interest groups that employ their access to power to structure urban space.

BIDs in effect mediate consumer preferences and choices. When they cater to middle class and upper class market sensibilities, they reinforce one ideology of place
over others (Sorkin 1992, Zukin 1995). At the same time, the uneven and fragmented spatiality of investment ensures the availability of urban terrain within which value can potentially be excavated in the future, in this way ensuring cycles of investment and the potential for future profits. The flip side of valorization, however, remains the continued stigmatization of spaces within the city’s boundaries (Weber 2002).

In the US, where notions of race, ethnicity and class have structured privilege through the production of specific ideologies of place (Squires and Kubrin 2004), representations of space, therefore, are expressive of historical processes of inclusion and exclusion. It follows, then, that interests can be seen to have a material foundation as well as express an attending ideological framework. The historical structuring of these dimensions forms collective alliances.

**Turning to the Study at Hand**

Urban scholar Monti (1999) proffers,

>[t]here is nothing new about business men dunning each other so that they can improve the area where their shops are located. This has been going on for over 200 years in the United States. These additions were seen as benefiting the whole town or city, even if they went to a small part of the municipality at first. Looked at in another way, all the physical improvements and additional services that went to business districts helped to fix the identity of these areas as places dedicated to order, and of course, of prosperity. These expressions of bourgeois sensibility made the city more ‘progressive’ in the eyes of local folk and visitors. In much the same way as street lamps lit the night and extended not only the waking hours of cities but also the persons’ commitments to good habits, latter day “business improvement districts” reassert the legitimacy of bourgeois values in parts of cities which seem to have forgotten them. (13-14)
In this line of argument, BIDs hark back to the progressive era where self-interested, yet enlightened private sector engagement and investment were seen to serve the collectivity. What stands out in this viewpoint is that strategies to “revitalize,” or as the case may be, to “conserve” urban areas need only focus on reestablishing civility through the physical redesign of urban space to banish the social disorder caused by bad behavior. Left out of the analysis is an examination of the underlying structural causes and the historical regulation of social relations that led to urban disinvestment, poverty and neighborhood decline. An analysis that contextualizes BIDs within the historical trajectory of urban policy within the US -- recognizing its spatial and social effects in particular cities --, may find that the current structure of BIDs empowers interests and ideologies of place that may in fact become implicated in reinforcing patterns of social and spatial segregation and separation.

In chapters 5 and 6, I engage in precisely this discussion, namely how urban development policies and attendant representations of space and ideologies of place unfolded in Washington, DC. The case study area has undoubtedly been one of the most diverse neighborhood areas within a starkly divided and segregated city; therefore, it merits a historical discussion of how this “borderland” came to be produced and what role the area plays in contemporary aims to regenerate DC’s inner city neighborhoods.

In order to understand the historical structuring of contemporary interest alignments, I examine the processes that led to the shift toward entrepreneurial governance in Washington DC before I turn to the micropolitics of neighborhood BIDs in the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area. By engaging the history of urban development, I intend to contextualize the contemporary urban landscape of DC within the social relations that produced it.
But first, let me lay out the research methodology on which the case study is based. The next chapter explains the extended case methodology through which I try to integrate the macro and micro analyses of the emergence and uses of BIDs in DC. The chapter also discusses the specific data gathering methods I employed to develop a coherent narrative.
CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Extended Case Method

Departing from the notion that the timing of the emergence of BIDs coincides with the ascendance of neoliberalism shaping economic development polices and reshaping governance, I designed a nested case study, employing the extended case method. I wanted to understand the local level processes I was observing, by contextualizing them in the relation to macro-level processes. Burawoy (1991) postulates that

[t]he extended case method seeks to uncover the macro foundations of a microsociology. It takes the social situation as the point of empirical examination and works with given general concepts and laws about states, economies, legal orders, and the like to understand how those micro situations are shaped by wider structures (282).

The extended case method then is a useful strategy to examine cases chosen for their particularities, rather than for their possible comparative similarities to other cases, in order to examine the variegated manifestations of macro-level processes in local-level political, economic and social relations.

In this work I aim to understand the interest-alignment and the attendant representations of urban space driving the use of BIDs as a vehicle to secure economic reinvestment not only in downtown areas but in neighborhoods as well; therefore, I embed the discussion of BIDs within economic and political processes shaping urban policy and governance. The intention is to connect the proliferation of place-making efforts to the structural opportunities and constraints influencing local fields of action.

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26 Some sections of this chapter were published in Schaller and Modan (2005).
BIDs are being used strategically to “revitalize” or “stabilize” targeted geographic areas of US cities and towns. In my study, however, I wanted to pay particular attention to the implications of place-based restructuring in neighborhoods that are economically and ethnically diverse, focusing thus not only on the representations of urban space as articulated by BIDs and their supporters but also those articulations of urban space, for example, those of some of resident- and merchant-groups, that are discounted.

**Case Study Research and Choosing the Case**

Case study research, Flyvberg (2003) argues, is crucial to human learning in general, but particularly in the field of planning, precisely, because it contextualizes knowledge production; case study research, he notes, furthers understanding through the direct and purposeful engagement with the minutiae of everyday life and planning practice (428). Praxis, which posits the continual interaction of theory and practice, grounds knowledge production in the field of planning. Praxis prevents the process of de-linking theory from the social and political situations in which planning operates. Cambell (2003) writes, “[p]lanning’s emphasis on contemporary causal processes is clear; it is an action-oriented field seeking cause-effect understanding to guide intervention” (2). Both Flyvberg (2003) and Cambell (2003), then, underline the importance of detailed, contextualized case studies. Case studies, they posit, can describe the effects of urban policy and planning practice on particular places, which in turn guides not only the formulation of contextually informed recommendations but also the (re)construction of theory (Burawoy 1991).

In choosing the case study area I paid attention to Burawoy’s (1991) assertion that “the significance of the case relates to what it tells us about the world in which it is embedded” (281). Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant in Washington DC offered an interesting case area for several reasons: 1) Washington, DC came to the BID
movement fairly late; yet, it has embraced BIDs and at the time of the study was exploring ways to create a model for neighborhood-based BIDs, 2) Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant, the neighborhoods that were designated as the site for this model, also constitute the most ethnically and economically diverse area in DC; 3) The neighborhoods are part of the mid-city planning area in close proximity to the downtown area and have been the target for revitalization and renewal since the 1950’s; 4) since the 1950’s the neighborhoods have been identified with political progressivism; therefore, place-making strategies could be expected to take an inclusive rather than exclusive approach.

I have been immersed in the neighborhood life of the case study area since the 1980’s, first as a public high school student, living in Mount Pleasant from 1983-1986, a college student returning for weekends and vacation from 1986-1990, then as a public school teacher in 1992, 1993 and part of 1994, and finally, as a community development professional from 1998 to 2000. As business program manager, working for the CDC leading the BID efforts, I attended monthly advisory neighborhood commission (ANC) meetings, participated in the internal discussions and planning of the BID, assisted with the writing of the grant proposals to the city’s Department of Housing and Economic Development (DHCD), served as point person to a HUD funded university-community partnership as well as for the organizational efforts building a regional Latino affordable housing coalition. I also provided direct technical assistance to local merchants and organized and taught micro-entrepreneurship courses. I returned in 2006 to conduct follow-up research. Consequently, the case study data is based on both extensive participant observation, filtered through the lens of an engaged community-based planning practice in the area, and on structured interviews and mapping workshops conducted during a period when I occupied a more distanced position from the everyday life of the area.
Hypothesis

BIDs subsume neighborhood social spaces into market rationality. BIDs, which are usually created by interests invested in enhancing the profitability of private property and creating new markets to attract a higher-paying consumer base into neighborhood economies, foster the intensification of market relations in urban spaces. Their governance structure creates an artificial boundary between a neighborhood’s residential space and its commercial district and within the latter reifies the rights of commercial property owners while suppressing the interests of other of neighborhood sub-groups.

Examining Ideologies of Place, Data and Methodology

In order to present a guide to data collected, I divided the data collection strategies by scale, moving from the national through the city to the local. This was to be not solely a localized case study. The national level data frames and contextualizes the emergence and work of BIDs, and the city and local level data serves to examine the implications of grafting the BID model onto ethnically and economically diverse urban neighborhoods; the latter constitute the analytical heart of the research.

On the national scale, content analysis of industry literature, web-based sources and data from industry associations (e.g. International Downtown Association, Manhattan Institute) as well as empirical studies of BIDs (e.g. Mitchell 1999, Hoyt 2003, Morçöl and Zimmermann 2006) serve to identify how BID policy makers, advocates and practitioners frame BIDs as well as what notion of the ‘livable’ and competitive city emerges, and what its components are. Since numerous works have largely delineated the scope and type of BIDs in large US urban areas, this study will refrain from reproducing those findings (Stokes 2002, Mitchell 1999, Hoyt 2003). My research focuses on the ideological underpinnings that national urban policy lends local BID advocates in their efforts to establish BIDs.
On the City-level, I conducted lengthy structured interviews (between 45 minutes to one hour and a half) with city planners in three departments, the Deputy Mayor’s Office for Economic Development and Planning, the Department of Transportation, and the Office of Planning. I also conducted a group interview with Downtown BID senior level directors, one of whom was responsible for writing and ensuring the passage of the BID enabling literature in 1996. I followed up on the team interview with individual interviews.

On the neighborhood scale, the study is rooted in an ethnographic approach. The first phase of the study from January 1999 to August 2000 coincided with my residence and employment by a community development corporation in the study area. The research during this time is based on my professional practice and relies on participant observation, interviewing, and community mapping workshops with residents, stratified by ethnicity, age, class, and place of residence as well as local officials.

The second phase of the research in 2006 comprises follow-up, key-informant interviews with the Adams Morgan BID manager, local community development professionals, local officials, closely involved in the process of establishing the BID, and program managers and directors of government agencies in charge of planning and economic development, as well as downtown BID executives.

Additionally, I interviewed business owners on the commercial corridors served by the BID. Finally, to complement the mapping workshops conducted in Mount Pleasant during the first phase of my research, I conducted mapping workshops with economic development professionals, ANC commissioners and residents in Adams Morgan. While I had planned to involve business owners in mapping workshops, this proved untenable due to time and scheduling constraints. I opted to
interview business owners on the corridors at length and was able to reach and sit down with 11 merchants to conduct lengthy one-on-one interviews.

To illustrate the various dimensions of intra- and inter-community conflicts in the area, the analysis draws heavily on the community mapping data, discussions on internet community forums as well as interviews. The aim is to bring to the surface the conflicting representations of space advanced by different interest groups in the area as well as the work of boundary construction to reinforce these representations. Since the analysis of the micropolitics of place is based in these data sources, the mapping workshops and the email forum deserve a more thorough explanation.

**Mapping “Neighborhood”**

The data collected during mapping workshops comes from two different time periods: 1) a mapping project conducted in the spring and summer of 2000, as the first stage of a large-scale neighborhood visioning project run by the Latino CDC where I worked at the time (the same CDC that was spearheading the BID); and 2) mapping workshops conducted in July 2006 where the CDC staff (not the same staff members) made initial contacts, facilitated the use of their space and helped with the recording of the sessions.

The original project (2000) was funded by a grant to strengthen neighborhood assets and resources by promoting collaboration between neighborhood constituents – both institutions and individuals – with no prior history of working together. The visioning project included a three-phase mapping project, an oral history project with the first successful housing cooperative in the neighborhood, and the creation of a Neighborhood Resource Center at the local public library, to include ESL, GED, and Citizenship resources, as well as information on community organizations and research on the neighborhood.
In the first phase of the mapping project, the CDC partnered with a Vietnamese youth center, the local public library, and a predominantly Whiteneighborhood civic organization as well as a senior center located in Adams Morgan, serving seniors living in the study area; in addition, members of a predominantly Latina/o housing cooperative, located on the commercial corridor, took part in the mapping project as participants in the CDC’s housing initiatives. The second phase of the project was to add a multi-ethnic housing cooperative association (whose membership included Latinos of multiple national backgrounds, African Americans, White-Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans) and a multi-ethnic locally-based youth research group.

The purpose of the first round of mapping workshops was to gather baseline data of multiple ways that community members construct neighborhood space. We also wanted to identify community members who would participate in the second phase of the project and (along with the youth and housing groups) would be interested in becoming facilitators to conduct mapping workshops within their own social networks in various locales, for example at beauty shops, bars, churches, laundromats, and among neighbors and friendship groups.

In addition to broadening the demographic base of the mapping data, the second phase of the mapping project was to be used to identify community members to participate in larger-scale community-development visioning projects. The third phase of the project was to work across, rather than within, social networks, bringing together participants from different mapping workshops to work on setting agendas for community development, and to strengthen relationships across ethnic, socioeconomic, and age groups.

**Mapping Process**

Because community members are often suspicious of or hesitant to participate in research, we took a social networks approach to the mapping project, working
through already established social networks so that people would feel more at ease, and more discussion would be generated than might have been possible in groups of strangers (cf. Milroy 1987). The first round of the mapping project in 2000 under the auspices of the CDC grant was conducted with members of the collaborating organizations: We started with six groups of community members who knew each other, representing five constituent groups: 1) the predominantly White Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) – which represent the lowest level of elected local government in DC; 2) Latina/o residents of a low-income housing cooperative; 3) housing organizers from the Latina/o community development corporation (these were employees who were community members and who were not involved in the design and planning of the mapping or visioning project and who were not involved in the neighborhood BID initiative); 4) three groups of teenagers in the Vietnamese youth center’s summer program; and 5) Latino/a seniors attending a day-time center in Adams Morgan. The mapping workshop facilitators for each group were visioning project staff members.

For the second round of mapping in July 2006 I was fortunate to have one of the original staff member with whom I had co-managed the visioning project join me (Schaller and Modan 2005) to conduct workshops in Adams Morgan. With the help of CDC staff we reached out through the CDC’s various organizational networks to facilitate three mapping workshops with the following constituents: 1) local ANC members, 2) community development professionals, including a representative of Adams Morgan Main Street, Re-store DC, and a current and former CDC employee, all residents of the area; 3) tenants, members of a tenant association of a building located within a block of one of the main commercial corridors.

We followed the same mapping process for both periods; however, in the latter, workshops, since they were conducted after the establishment of the BID in
Adams Morgan, we asked specific questions related to the subject in the second half of the discussion (Participants were not privy to the fact that we were interested in the BID until that time, however). Participants were asked to draw maps of the neighborhood that showed “how [they saw] this part of town”, and facilitators stated that “maps should show the important things that would make someone from somewhere else understand what the neighborhood is like, and what life here is like.” After the map drawing part of the workshop, each person explained her/his map to the group. In order to compensate for varied levels of literacy skills, we paid considerable attention the presentation and discussion portion of the workshops, as participants contributed equally to the conversation regardless of literacy skills.6 Facilitators encouraged participants to ask questions or make comments on each other's maps. The data generated in the workshops consists of both the maps themselves and the conversations about the maps.

Methodological Challenges

Due to institutional reorganizations and staff changes at the CDC leading the mapping project, the second and third phases of the original mapping project were never completed. This means that there are some limitations to the data available for the present study. First, there was only one African American participant in the mapping workshops – a member of the ANC – and he was present only for the post-map-drawing discussion part of the workshop. Thus, the present analysis gives little insight into the views of African American community members.27 This lack of African American participants may reflect the declining African American population in the areas and the consequent change in the local political power structure; had this study been done even 5 years earlier, there would have been more African Americans

in Mount Pleasant’s locally elected civic group, for example, and more African
American tenants in the housing cooperative building. Secondly, it is difficult to
know to what extent age plays a role, since in the data age and ethnicity are conflated.
However, given that the perspectives of the Vietnamese teenagers are in many ways
convergent with those of the Latino adults’, age does not seem to be as determining a
factor as ethnicity or class. Further research is therefore needed to investigate the
specific interaction of ethnicity, class, and age, as well as of gender, in the
representation and experience of urban space.

Similarly during the second period of mapping in 2006, the aim was to include
two merchant groups. This proved impossible; therefore, the merchants’ spatial
perceptions of the neighborhood as expressed in maps are absent. The small business
owners we contacted while interested in the project expressed a high level of anxiety
with regard to the time constraints they felt they faced on a daily basis. Instead, I
conducted face-to-face interviews with merchants on the two commercial corridors
included in the BID.

**Electronic constructions of space**

The Mount Pleasant Forum is a neighborhood email list that announces local
events and items or services people are offering or looking for, and where Mount
Pleasant residents, community workers, and merchants discuss community issues and
controversies. At the time of data collection (1999-2000) it had around 1000
members. The Adams Morgan list-serve was started in 1999 and in December 2006
served 1950 members. The lists present a diversity of opinions and allows for heated
debates regarding community life. Despite the large number of participants on the
lists, they reach only a limited segment of the community, for they are accessible only
to those who have the technical and (English) literacy skills, material resources, and
free time needed to access and participate in internet-based conversation. In addition
to people subscribed to the lists, however, other community members have it forwarded to their email while others read hard copies printed out by housemates or partners, or ones posted on apartment-building bulletin boards. Hard copies of the Mount Pleasant Forum during the original research period could even be found at the public library. The Forum and Adams Morgan list-serve play an important role in the community as debates on the list often resurface as agenda items in civic group and ANC meetings where community development policies and projects are determined.

This research project then analyzes the political process underlying the establishment of a particular BID in order to gain an understanding of the local interest groups with whom these BIDs representations of space align. An initial review of the literature and web-based texts revealed that representations of space and citizenship rooted in a neoliberal formulation of governance on which the BID model rests are reflected in textual references emanating not only from national, citywide, and local-level institutions advocating BIDs, but also from the city’s planning documents, such as the 2006 comprehensive plan draft and the downtown action agenda. These discourses and representations are also reiterated by local practitioners. I, thus, endeavored to investigate how these formulations become altered and / or reinforced by contextual factors during the process of translating theory and discourse into practice.

In investigating the historical production of Washington, DC’s urban space, I came to view BIDs as the latest manifestation in a trajectory of urban planning discourses, policies and practices implicated in producing DC’s fractured urban landscape. Thus, it became crucial to situate BIDs and their corresponding representations of space within the history of urban development as it has taken shape in DC.
CHAPTER 5
PLANNING THE CAPITAL CITY AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS: TALES OF INCORPORATION AND EXCLUSION

The District’s communities are connected by a shared heritage of urban design, reflecting the legacy of the L’Enfant Plan, the McMillan Plan, the Height Act of 1910, and preservation of much of the historic urban fabric. After more than two centuries of building, the nation’s capital is still a remarkable place. Urban design and streetscape policies must retain the historic, majestic, and beautiful qualities that make Washington unique among American cities (Mayor’s July 2006 Draft of Comprehensive Plan, 2-22).

While most visitors to the US capital expect the monumentality of Washington, the federal city and the seat of majority power, that they can explore on the mall, they are little prepared for DC (the District of Columbia), a city of neighborhoods marked by contradictions in wealth and even by abject poverty. DC like so many urban centers in the United States has struggled with out-migration, its neighborhoods, particularly “minority” neighborhoods, subjected to disinvestment and neglect. Yet, a movement to pull visitors from the monumental core and into the neighborhoods of the city intends to break through the image linkage that until fairly recently tied urban and inner city to “crime and grime” in order to restore an image of urban living characterized as the quintessence of sophistication, culturally textured and above all as safe (Justin and Goldsmith 2003, 6).

The imperative to ensure “clean and safe” areas is seen as the first and necessary step to restructuring DC’s urban space in order to secure economic investment as well as to recover its original vision enshrined in L’Enfant’s plan28 and

28 A plan many in the Black community consider to have been shaped and ultimately rescued by Benjamin Banneker.
the McMillan Plan of 1901. In DC, this effort is unfolding under the rubric of “growing the inclusive city,” a slogan embossed on the Mayor Williams’s recently released Draft Comprehensive Plan. A primary emphasis of the plan is on place-making, on harnessing the city’s economic development potential by drawing on DC’s particular history as well as its unique physical and cultural landscape.

This chapter takes a closer look at what came before the city’s positive “inclusive city” slogan, examining DC’s history of development to highlight the structural inequalities and production of Washington’s inequitable social spaces on which today’s plans are overlaid, and, in particular, considers the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods on which I base my case studies. The representation of space as advanced by planners, official plans, and increasingly quasi private, non-profit organizations, such as BIDs and city-marketing agencies, are superimposed on a “palimpsest of territorial struggles” in which race, in particular, has played a defining role (Harvey 2005); in DC, specifically, planning strategies and regime formations up until the 1970’s were suffused with racial and class ideologies overtly designed to restrict African American access to economic and political power and in so doing to diminish competition for employment, property, and business opportunities. These processes of regulating social relations composed successive ideologies of place that helped lay the foundation for structural inequalities in the context of which contemporary place-based initiatives may serve only to reinforce them (Avila 2004). When viewed from this historical perspective, BIDs then become inserted into rather than delinked from preceding urban planning discourses, policies and their effects.

In DC, as in cities across the country, neighborhood geographies were produced through the representations of space that legitimized the Black Codes,
restrictive covenants and urban removal. The attendant dominant ideologies of place, however, produced contradictions in space, resulting in oppositional representations and practices as well as violent protests. Thus, representations of space that by design reinforce inequalities tend to spawn conflict and in extreme cases events, such as the 1968 riots as well as the 1991 Latino uprisings in Mount Pleasant.

DC even today remains a racially and economically segregated city. Over the last 30 years and until only very recently 16th Street, NW, which runs north-south from Maryland to the White House, constituted a seemingly impenetrable borderline between majority African American neighborhoods and majority white neighborhoods in the northwest quadrant of the city. Yet, since the 1980’s the racial, ethnic and cultural landscape of DC, particularly in the case study area, has been reshaped by an influx of immigrants, primarily from Latin America, but also from Southeast Asia, and Ethiopia, among others. The Mount Pleasant / Adams Morgan area, one of DC’s most ethnically and economically diverse areas, lies along this border area. This demographic change has added further complexity to the political and social relations among community groups and delineation of the municipal government’s constituent bases; thereby, reshaping the political landscape. Today the area is considered part of the “mid-city planning area” adjoining the inner circle downtown residential neighborhoods and central business districts (Williams 1988, McGovern 1998).

DC is, furthermore, a special city in that from the outset its governance regimes were shaped by its dual identity as federal city, the city belonging to all “Americans” and, the District of Columbia, the city of local residents. Different sectors not only of the local population but of the national population, then, have

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30 In effect the DC metropolitan areas remains segregated along an East/West Division (See “ A Region Divided: the State of Growth in Greater Washington, DC.” A Brookings National Issues Forum. The Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Wednesday July 28, 1999).

31 Major redevelopment projects on 14th street in the adjacent neighborhood of Columbia Heights, including the extension of the metro line have sparked the gentrification of areas east of 16th street.
sought to imprint their vision of Washington, DC on the city and its neighborhoods; the way to accomplish this is to access power.\textsuperscript{32}

Precisely, because contemporary economic development strategies focus increasingly on place-based investment initiatives to draw in a specific class-oriented set of street-level retailers, residents and visitors, these strategies should be examined through the prism of social relations circumscribing whose experience and vision of place is included and whose are left out, as well as who has access to these “newly” remade places and who does not. Consequently, it is helpful to examine successive governance arrangements, or regimes, in DC in relation to their attendant representations of space or “ideologies of place” (Modan 2007); dominant representations of space have structured access and have tended to resurface at different times in different incarnations with the intention of recapturing a particular heritage for DC. In order to relate macro processes to micro realities, I attempt to show how urban development processes shaped the neighborhoods of the case study area.

\textit{Neighborhood Histories}\textsuperscript{33}

Taking an excursion through the case study area neighborhoods’ histories will offer a glimpse into how the development of the larger city played itself out on the neighborhood commercial corridors and residential areas. Although, the dissertation treats the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area as a single case study due to the fact that the original BID proposal spanned the two neighborhoods and they have been

\textsuperscript{32} Established at the cross roads of two slave states, Washington harbored a fairly large black population from its inception, and from its inception attempts through congress as well as through the local government to curtail the growth, movement as well as political and economic empowerment of the black population resulted in policies inimical to the development of an integrated urban fabric and fractured the city (Gillette 2006, 27, Horton 2003, Manning 1998).

served by one community development corporation since 1991, Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant constitute two distinct neighborhoods.

Adams Morgan’s early history is not one of a cohesive neighborhood; its sub-neighborhoods, like Mount Pleasant, were first developed as streetcar suburbs in the late 1800’s. During the 19th century and up until 1950, the area that is known today as Adams Morgan constituted a mosaic of sub-developments and neighborhoods with distinct demographic and architectural characteristics as well as commercial identities. The name Adams Morgan “stuck” in 1955. The name, first hyphenated as Adams-Morgan, was derived from the two schools in the neighborhoods that had been separately educating Whites and Blacks. Parents organized around desegregation, and the resulting process of coalition building came to define Adams Morgan’s identity until fairly recently. It incorporates the neighborhood’s progressive history and exemplifies that cooperation and solidarity across racial lines can bring about constructive and progressive outcomes on the neighborhood level. This progressive identity still persists among many old-time residents and merchants as well as some “newcomers.” Yet, Adams Morgan continues to transition through a process of gentrification that commenced in the 1970’s, stalled in the 1980’s only to accelerate in the late 1990’s.

In the early 1800’s the area that today spans Adams Morgan as well as Mount Pleasant, sitting on a hill removed from the swampy low-lands, occupied prime space within the District’s topography (Henig 1982, 12). This location influenced the stately architectural developments that were subsequently built in the late 19th century and early 20th century (Henig 1982, 12). Up until that time, the area had maintained a suburban almost rural quality, sparsely populated and characterized by large estates. By the early 20th century, however, the streetcar lines linking the area to downtown
and the Federal City and other neighboring residential areas precipitated neighborhood urbanization (Henig 1982).

While official Mount Pleasant has roughly spanned the area it still encompasses today, it is easiest to comprehend the sub-neighborhoods of Adams Morgan in relation to what many consider the neighborhood’s contemporary commercial heart, the intersection of Columbia Road and 18th Street, NW. The process of urbanization along the southeastern border of the neighborhood – 16th street and Florida -- was led in the late 1880’s through 1910 by Mary Foote Henderson, the wife of Senator John B. Henderson, who may have influenced the demographics of the neighborhood by persuading embassies (Spanish, Mexican, Cuban and French among others) to locate alongside her own grand home (Cultural Tourism DC 2005). To give the area more splendid setting, she used her political connections to persuade the federal government to build Meridian Hill Park, later to be renamed Malcolm X Park, across from her mansion on land she owned. In the process, however, she evicted African Americans who had settled in the area during the civil war (Cultural Tourism DC 2005). Many relocated to the adjacent area, between 16th Street and 18th Street, known today as Reede Cooke, which evolved distinctly with more of a commercial and industrial composition. North of Columbia Road the then director of the Smithsonian Institution developed Lanier Heights. It became known as a “fine residential area” as the founder’s colleagues and friends settled in to form a close-knit neighborhood (Cultural Tourism DC 2005).

Both Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant have undergone major demographic transitions since their development as street car suburbs in the late early 20th century, which concurrently brought changes to the commercial corridors. Prior to the 1950’s,

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34 The borders and sub-areas, I identify, are approximations as boundaries are permeable and shift depending on the vantage point and historical moment.
the neighborhoods with the exception of the Reede Cook area in Adams Morgan were predominately White middle and upper-middle class. Citizen associations\textsuperscript{35} formed almost concurrent to their development and, particularly in Mount Pleasant, were used to ensure racial homogeneity, which was perceived as a requirement to secure property values. Adams Morgan differs in one respect in that the area until the 1950’s was composed of four distinct neighborhoods: Lanier Heights, Kalorama Heights, Washington Heights and Reede Cook, which forms the southeastern section abutting 16th street and has historically been predominately African American. The former three citizens associations, however, at times coordinated their efforts with Mount Pleasant to pressure for infrastructure and service improvements (Washington Post 1895 and 1899).

The 1950’s wrought many changes in the life of the neighborhoods. Restrictive covenants were declared unenforceable in 1948 (Shelley versus Kramer), and the desegregation of school was mandated in 1954 (Brown versus Board of Education). During this time period, White property owners in the case of the Mount Pleasant and Kalorama Heights citizens associations continued to lobby overtly for the continued protection of the interests of White property owners (Henig 1982, 16).\textsuperscript{36} It is also during this time, nonetheless, that Adams Morgan coalesced into a single neighborhood. Community wide, often cantankerous, discussions that raged between 1952 and 1962 around urban renewal proposals for the neighborhoods delineated the deep cleavages between the sub-neighborhoods. The conflicts, more importantly, also fomented the beginnings of inter-community cooperation across racial barriers. The

\textsuperscript{35} Citizens associations formed in the White neighborhoods and civic associations in Black neighborhoods, signaling the different social and political positions assigned to persons according to their racial categorization.

\textsuperscript{36} A Washington Post article in 1948 refers to the Mount Pleasant Citizens Association’s consideration of plans advanced by the Federation of Citizens Associations to circumvent the ban on covenants. Washington post, The (October 11, 1948). Citizens Association Unit Studies plans to Circumvent Covenant Ban.” Pg. 4.
urban renewal plans were buried but by 1954 and 1955, parents in the area organized to desegregate the two local schools, the (White) Adams school and the (Black) Morgan school (Henig 1982, 16, Cultural Tourism DC 2005).

Since the advent of desegregation and post-war urban policies encouraging the suburbanization of the White middle class outside of the District’s lines, the demographic composition of the neighborhoods have changed successively (Williams 1988, Henig 1982, Jackson 1985, See Table 1).

Table 1: Percent of Census Tract Population by Ethnicity and Race (1970-2000)

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Adams Morgan</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Adams Morgan</td>
<td>40.2</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of the Census Tract Population: Non-Hispanic Blacks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Adams Morgan</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Adams Morgan</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Adams Morgan</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Adams Morgan</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of the Census Tract Population: Hispanic</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Adams Morgan</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>East Adams Morgan</td>
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<td>West Adams Morgan</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Adams Morgan</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Neighborhood Change Database (NCDB) 1970 – 2000, US Census Long Form, Geolytics

By 1970, all census tracts evidenced a significant proportion of African Americans; in four of them African Americans constituted the majority populations. Adams Morgan at this time was already beginning to exhibit a fairly high Latino population. As a result of these demographic trends, the composition and identities of the commercial corridors continued to transition as well. In Adams Morgan, Henig
(1982) notes, immigrant entrepreneurs were already opening stores to cater to a growing local market in the 1960’s and 1970’s. By the early 1980’s the “sizable Hispanic population” Henig (1982) writes, “was [Adams Morgan’s] most distinctive trait to outsiders” (16). And, businesses, such as restaurants, began to market this “ethnic charm” to “outsiders” and “Non-Hispanics.” (16). Williams (1988), describes the transition on the Mount Pleasant corridor as beginning later, in the 1980’s, when immigrant entrepreneurs began to replace African American businesses on Mount Pleasant Street.

While Black population peaked in 1970’s and began to decline thereafter in all census tracts of the area, the Latino population was growing. The African American population experienced an average decline of 33% between 1970 and 2000. The Latino/a population on the other hand grew an average of 26.5% in Mount Pleasant and 15% in Adams Morgan during that same time-period (1970 to 2000). In 2000 the area was still a prism of diversity compared to other neighborhoods in the city; yet, the Latino/a population since the 1990’s has begun to decline in the western portion of the study area, that is western, Adams Morgan while increasing in eastern census tracts, indicating a west to east gentrification dynamic.

The repercussions of the 1968 riots included housing disinvestment and neighborhood demographic changes. Housing prices declined, especially in neighborhoods abutting the area along 16th Street, such as Columbia Heights, that had burned in 1968 and remained largely a waste-land for years to come. Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant were affected precisely by this dynamic. While the “White Flight” of the 1950’s had already depressed prices in the area, the decades following the riots marked another round of disinvestment. This time middle class African Americans were also leaving the city. At the same time, this cycle attracted young people of middle-class backgrounds into the city. These “pioneers” were
simultaneously fleeing the suburbs and specifically locating in the area drawn in by its emerging demographic diversity and its architectural composition (Cf. Modan 2007). Their liberal to leftist politics attracted them to the multi-ethnic character of Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant while their class-based architectural aesthetics attracted them to the neighborhoods’ largely pre-war housing stock, some as renters, some as buyers (Gale 1976; see also Ley 1996).37

Areas, such as Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant, then, became known for their multi-racial demographic character, their organizational density and progressive politics (Henig 1982, 16). Adams Morgan’s name itself, as noted, stands as witness to this progressive neighborhood identity construction (Henig 1982). The parochial identities of the 19th century suburb communities of Lanier Heights, Kalorama Heights, Washington Heights and Reede Cooke were overcome to find common purpose (Henig 1982). Moreover, the combined areas in the eyes of many had become 

el barrio of DC (Cadaval 1998 and 2003).

The inception of the Latino community that coalesced in the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area began in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Latinos, working as professional or domestic staff connected primarily with embassies, international organizations and the US federal government moved to the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area (Modan 2007). Through the seventies and eighties a sizeable Central American immigrant population settled in the area, which became increasingly considered a Latino place. Businesses, community, social service, and media organizations serving Latino interests also concentrated in the area (Cadaval 1998). In terms of national background, the Latino community was extremely diverse until the mid-eighties, when a large number of refugees from the US supported Central American civil wars moved

37 Cited from Schaller and Modan 2005.
to the neighborhoods (Schaller and Modan 2005). The majority of these immigrants stemmed from El Salvador and lived in precarious conditions due to their undocumented residency status.

Today the area still figures as one of the most diverse areas in the city; albeit, Adams Morgan is becoming progressively less diverse. The reason may lie in the inequitable distribution of wealth among these sectors of the population, which

Table 2: Homeownership, Median Income and Per-Capita Income by Ethnicity and Race, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood Census Tracts</th>
<th>Percent of Population White (Non-Hispanic)</th>
<th>Homeownership Rate (%)</th>
<th>Median Income ($)</th>
<th>Per Capita Income ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant 27.1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>53,839</td>
<td>38,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant 27.2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71,838</td>
<td>42,736</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Adams Morgan 38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59,271</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>50,634</td>
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<td>West Adams Morgan 40.1</td>
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Sources: Census 2000 Summary Files (SF 1) 100-Percent Data and Summary File 3 (SF – 3) Sample Data

influences who can stay, and who must move.
Table 2, above, lays out the differential homeownership rates, per capita income and median incomes in reference to Non-Hispanic Whites, Blacks, Asians and Hispanics since these compose the major populations in both neighborhoods. Non-Hispanic Whites as is evident exhibit both much higher homeownership rates and generally have higher incomes than the other three groups. As Williams (1988) and Modan (2007) note, while middle-class, professional Blacks are also moving into this area, the newcomers tend to be predominately White. At the same time, there are long-time Black homeowners in both neighborhoods who, Williams (1988) argues, have a markedly different conception and experience of neighborhood life and whose interests diverge from those of the newcomers.

For the past few decades both Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan have served as a prism of urban diversity in which shifting notions of community and urbaneness have been applied to build a sense of identity, support revitalization proposals and circumscribe social and physical belonging; at the same time, neighborhood politics have been and continue to be fraught with tensions among the diverse residents as well as businesses and property owners, which constitute overlapping communities that hold divergent visions of development (Williams 1988, Modan 2007, McGovern 1998). As the 1991 riot in the Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan area indicates, the incorporation of these populations has not occurred without tensions. The following history of DC serves to contextualize the neighborhood histories. The history attempts to uncover the layers of the “palimpsest of territorial struggles” that shape today’s disputes over the right to define and claim neighborhood spaces in DC. The rest of the chapter also frames the structural inequities that have hobbled the city and has created seemingly intractable conflicts of interests among the diverse sectors of the population who already live, work and invest within it as well as those who are not yet there.
**Governing Development in DC, Emergence of an Exclusionary Project**

Washington, DC originally conceived in 1790 as the administrative center of the newly established republic was to reflect in its form the “magnificent intentions” of a young idealistic and democratic nation (Gillette 2006, 5, Jaffe and Sherwood 1994, 13). The city, however, when it became the seat of governments in 1800, simultaneously became the locus of the nation’s contentious politics and monumental struggles and increasingly came to reflect its contradictions. Gillette (2006) aptly describes the roots of the city’s intractable spatial divide:

Caught between opposing forces for beautification and social justice, Washington gained two identities: one closely associated with the federal presence, visited annually by millions of tourists and known as the city beautiful; the other consisting of the city’s indigenous neighborhood, many of them beset by inadequate housing, soaring levels of poverty and crime and social disorder. (xi)

The city’s urban spaces were shaped by the collision of these contradictory realities, the product of grand representations of space filtered through the prism of racial fears. The history of racial regulation in Washington, DC is inextricably implicated in the production of the city’s urban landscape and shapes how we in our diverse incarnations as women, men, children, African American, Latino, Asian, White, planners, government officials, unemployed, mothers, and fathers, etc. continue to conceive, perceive and experience the city space.

From the outset, Washington could be viewed as a city of missed opportunities. The initial neglect of the city by a Congress held hostage to state politics, which unfortunately expressed itself in an unwillingness to dedicate the necessary resources to give form to the bold vision advanced by L’ Enfant’s plan,38

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38 Gillette (2006) posits that the plan reflected the democratic aspirations of the new republic connecting the public core and private neighborhoods through a “carefully orchestrated’ design” (7).
might be seen as the harbinger of future developments. The city, subsequently, became micro-managed by Congress in 1871, thereby, undermining the city’s fiscal capacity to provide adequate services and fund infrastructure improvements as well as disenfranchising the majority of its residents; for, DC for most of its history was neither independent nor tied to a State.

**Reconstruction (1863 – 1871): Hopes of Inclusion Foreclosed**

Washington, DC in the post civil war years, under the leadership of radical Republicans, experienced the short-lived ascendance of an urban regime built upon the political empowerment of Washingtonian African American men who gained the right to vote in the 1867 local elections. The regime included African American elected officials. Its rhetoric, furthermore, embraced principles of economic opportunity and the expansion of citizenship rights (Gillette 2006, Horton, 2003).

Washington had long been a magnet for African Americans migrating from the rural South as well as adjacent states in search of economic opportunities in the building trades and service economies (Horton 2003, 29). This trend accelerated during reconstruction as evidenced in the rapid growth of the Black population between 1860 and 1870. By 1870, they constituted one-third of the population, a trend that continued into the twentieth century (Horton 2003, 70).

Horton 2003, notes, that the extension of civil rights persuaded African Americans to seek a better life in the city. “None [of these rights],” the author notes, “was more important than the right to vote” because this right in particular “was seen as the safeguard of black freedom” (71). Policies to open up government jobs and

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39 The inability to reconcile the priorities of the Federal government and that of the local residents was foreseen early on and editorialized, issuing warnings against the “mixing of great with small concerns” foreshadowed the betwixt position from which the District of Columbia would develop. Gillette notes Congress’ historic “reluctance to provide funding adequate to local needs” (15).

40 Until 1871 Washington and Georgetown had separate mayors (Gillette 2006). My focus here is on the city of Washington.
business opportunities to African Americans during the era of reconstruction supported the emergence of an African American middle class and with it the establishment of middle class African American neighborhoods in what is today the central city and mid-city planning area -- neighborhoods such as Shaw and Ledroit Park (Horton 2003, 74). DC as a result also became recognized as a center of African American middle class cultural and educational life; this drew families northward to give their children educational opportunities in the segregated yet renowned schools and Universities (Horton 2003).

Loss of Self-determination and Local Democratic Control (1871)

The disenfranchisement and stripping of political municipal self–determination in 1871, after only a brief decade, contributed to the city’s early inability to shape an alternative future (Gillette 2006, Jaffe and Sherwood 1994). Burdened by an outstanding inherited debt and the loss of congressional appropriations –a recurring theme for DC --, the progressive administration became vulnerable to attacks by the opposition, resulting in the installation of an interim territorial government and the subsequent take-over of the city by Congress with passage of the Organic Act in 1878.41

The regime shift changed the focus from “liberties to bricks and mortar,” which held two important consequences for Washington, DC42: 1) it foreclosed the opportunity to build an integrated city wherein African Americans along with the White populations would participate in planning for the city (Horton 2003) and, 2) the

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41 Other News papers of the time, like the Star, focused on the dangers that suffrage and black political power harbored for the city’s future (Gillette 2006, 70).
42 Under the territorial government, Georgetown became part of the District of Columbia administration, and as such part of Washington, DC.
city’s economic base was to become government employment\textsuperscript{43} and tourism (Gillette 2006, 61).

The rhetoric that had been used to discredit the regime focused on the dangers inherent to Black suffrage, describing African Americans as the “idle” and “dangerous” classes. This political rhetoric portended the curtailment of the so recently acquired rights and the dismantling of the reconstruction era economic gains. Moreover, many of the positions that had been popularly elected became subject to political appointments under the reorganization of the city’s governance; thus, political aspirations for African Americans were barred for another one hundred years.

The city at the same time was growing up, engendering visions of the “Greater Washington” in the imagination of developers and planners (Gillette 2006, 69).\textsuperscript{44} Alexander “Boss” Shepherd, who ran the Board of Public Works during the territorial government and subsequently became governor, oversaw the large-scale infrastructure improvements of the early 1870’s (McGovern 1998). Washington, DC was being represented as a “city built for visitors and residents,” and physical improvements made to the city were employed to “attract and hold prosperous residents in the city” (Gillette 2006, 71 - 72). During this period --drawn in by the parks, avenues, infrastructure improvements--, Allamong Jacob (2003) notes, the “nouveau riches were flocking to DC,” and began to leave their imprint on the architectural heritage of the city (2003, 81). From their perspective, the author further offers, DC, unlike other Northeastern cities, whose high society remained closed to them, was “democratic” because “money or beauty open[ed] any door” (81).

\textsuperscript{43} The rate of increase for federal jobs was far greater than the general population increase (Gillette 2006, 77).

\textsuperscript{44} The District’s population grew from 73,492 in 1860 to 230,402 in 1890 (Manning 1998, 332), and the black population grew from 14,307 in 1860 to 75,572 in 1890 (Horton 2003, 71). Congress declared slaves in the District freed in July 1862, contributing to the in migration (Gillette 2006, 67)
The political alignments that gained power during the Shepherd era definitively derailed plans to make Washington into a hub for commerce or industry. This turn, however, structured the labor market toward construction industries, government employment and the service sector; racial regulations simultaneously segmented the labor forces, giving Whites access to stable civil service employment and entrepreneurial opportunities while Blacks were relegated to unstable industries and low-paying jobs (Horton 2003).

Shepherd, nevertheless, ran the district’s fiscal health into the ground,\(^{45}\) and the resultant crisis precipitated the final takeover of the city by Congress. Congress, subsequently, governed through the Committee on the District of Columbia and appointed city commissioners for the next one hundred years. Participation and access to power and resources, thus, became concentrated in nationally appointed individuals who acted as powerbrokers. Accordingly, the Act “wiped out in one stroke the intensely active role of citizenship that had characterized all local jurisdictions” (Gillette 2006, 66). While wealthy and connected Whites created a system of citizens associations to manage their access to power and crucial resources, Blacks and ostensibly less connected poor Whites were successfully disenfranchised.

*Suburban* Neighborhood Development, *Institutionalizing Segregation*

The governance of the city created social inequities. During the early 20th century the divided city congealed further along two fissures. The delineation between the Federal city of Washington and the city of neighborhoods surrounding this ceremonial and bureaucratic core hardened. Simultaneously, the city increasingly fractured along racial lines. It is the Wilson era (1913-1921), however, that Manning (1998) identifies as solidifying the spatial segregation of the city.

\(^{45}\) The depression of 1873 undoubtedly contributed (Gillette 2003, Horton 2003, 75).
In the 1920’s and 1930’s rural to urban migration accelerated, and as in other US cities the city’s Black population doubled in this decade. Manning (1998) cites a convergence of privately organized and officially institutionalized initiatives that severely curtailed the economic and residential opportunities of African Americans. Increasingly threatened, Whites in DC, as in other US cities, organized locally based efforts to prevent African Americans (and other minorities, such as Jews and Mexicans) from owning properties in their neighborhoods by placing restrictive covenants, endorsed both by local governments and federal agencies, on their property deeds (Manning 1995, Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom 2002, see also Katzenelson 1981 for a discussion of New York City). At the same time, hiring preferences for Whites and occupational segmentation were legislated during the Presidency of Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921).

“The most striking aspect of the backlash,” writes Manning (1998), “is the spatial displacement and concentration of the widely dispersed African American population, within and outside the District, into racially confined neighborhoods of the inner city” (333). The Federal approval of segregation dovetailed with the aims of private land-use based initiatives, spearheaded by all-white citizens associations. In Washington, DC these policies resulted in the spatial concentration of African Americans in the city so that by 1947 two-thirds of the African American population already lived in a 2.25 mile radius surrounding downtown (Manning 1995, Horton 2003).

At the same time, the ideals and the discourse advanced by the City Beautiful Movement, which became enshrined in the McMillan Plan of 1901, would become the leitmotif among planners, architects, civic organizations and business leaders seeking to revitalize the city’s image, both in reference to its ceremonial and downtown core and to the neighborhood life they envisioned. The vision centered on the tenet that
comprehensive planning in the form of physical and aesthetic design would shape the civic minds and hearts of a city’s inhabitants.

Under the auspices of the Board of Trade and the Federation of Citizens Associations, development during late 19th century and early 20th century turned to the establishment of neighborhoods and the beautification of the downtown core (Gilette 2006, 76). In 1898 the Board of Trade, which was closely wed to real estate interests that sought to extend residential development, expressed its vision for Washington as follows:

Much of Washington’s strength, like that of a woman, is in its beauty; its face is its fortune. Among the Board’s most important committees, therefore, are those which labor to increase the city’s material prosperity by developing its external attractiveness. (Annual Report cited in Cocks 2001, 94)

The abstract space represented by the Board of Trade and also in the McMillan plan envisioned Washington as the pride of residents and visitors alike, a city that offered urban amenities, such as public lighting, sewage, paved streets and sidewalks, urban green spaces, efficient transportation to the business district and community spirit.46 This representation invoked a spatial practice joining comprehensive planning with privately enforced but publicly sanctioned racial exclusion, containment, and repression. DC was not an isolated case, however; the spatial practices that arose through the conjoining of racial regulation and local boosterism was being applied nation wide, “amplified through the National Real Estate Board, which published numerous textbooks, pamphlets, and periodicals warning real estate firms that racial minorities threatened property values and that neighborhoods should be racially homogenous to maintain their desirability” (Gotham 2000, 621, Avila 2004).

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Facilitated, furthermore, by innovations in mass-transit, middle class and wealthy whites moved further out into the “suburban” neighborhoods of the city -- into its street car suburbs. While planning-minded city commissioners facilitated the subdivision of outlying tracts of land according to city grid, they were politically conceived as defendable enclaves. In many cases white “suburbanites” replaced African American “squatters” who had been expelled by the developers building the new “villages” and mansions (Gillette 2006, 80). Those neighborhoods surrounding the Federal City core -- particularly the ‘alley dwellings’ in the inner city core around the central business and the monumental, as well as governmental, areas as a result became predominately African American (Spencer 2003). This terrain subsequently has become the repeated focus of renewal, redevelopment, and improvement initiatives.

The city to all intents and purposes during this early period was governed by Congress through the body of Congressional District committees and appointed Commissioners. At the same time active Citizens Associations secured services and funding for their neighborhoods. The all-White citizens associations, whose membership was generally restricted to property owners, filled the political vacuum created by Federal control. Yet, at the same time that they effectively secured infrastructure improvements, access to transportation lines and essential urban services, they also became notorious in their role as enforcers of restrictive covenants (Gotham 2000, 628).

Gotham (2000) notes that National Association of Real Estate Boards47 actively promoted the development of homebuilders as well as homeowner or citizen associations and hailed restrictive covenants “as a chief land-use tool to maintain

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47 The National Association of Real Estate Boards, earliest incarnation was founded in 1908, and changed its name in 1915. Today it is the National Association of Realtors. (http://www.realtor.org/LibWeb.nsf/pages/fg002, accessed December 2006)
property values, residential stability, profitable housing transactions, and for controlling the movement of racial groups in urban space” (623). Interestingly, the Federation of Citizen Associations, and more specifically property owners, seemed quite content to keep the District under Federal control due to the influence they exercised over the commissioners and the District committees in Congress and the simultaneous political and social control this secured over the African American population.49

During the era of segregation, DC’s African American community produced flourishing economic and social spaces in spite of economic, social and political barriers. The most prominent of these is the Shaw neighborhood adjacent to the southeast border of today’s Adams Morgan. The U street commercial corridor became the pulsating commercial and cultural heart of the African American community.50 Segregation and economic restrictions, had forced the local business community and leaders to harness resources from within and develop oppositional political and economic strategies to survive and prosper. Leaders through the Negro Alliance, for example, campaigned on the following slogan, ”[d]on’t buy where you can’t work” (Crew 2003, 221). The result was the proliferation of Black-owned businesses in the Shaw area. Locals devised these strategies – such as picketing and public gatherings - - to claim the city’s public space in order to confront the dominant regulations over the use and configuration of urban space. These activities were directed at creating spaces of representation to project alternative possibilities (Lefebvre 1991).

48 In other cities and regions of the country, these inimical policies were targeted at other “non-white” populations (Hannigan 1998).
50 This corridor has recently been in the media due to emerging conflicts over the proposed renaming of the U Street corridor as “Little Ethiopia” between old-timer Black Washingtonians and Ethiopian immigrants. Transcript available at NPR.org under “Naming Dispute Brewing over Naming of U Street” All things Considered, March 28, 2006.
Federal Urban Policy and the Production of Space in Metropolitan DC

Post World War II Federal policies biased toward the suburbs and the formation of a White middle class, however, further solidified a pattern of urban decline and increasing spatial segregation. The policies encouraged the outward movement of Whites to the suburbs through subsidized home mortgage loans coupled with redlining—lending patterns that classified urban neighborhood, particularly minority neighborhoods as high risk. This trend was buoyed by transportation subsidies that favored suburban commuters and isolated urban residents from employment opportunities (Manning 1995, Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom 2002).

In 1934 the Federal Housing Act (FHA), through the Federal Housing Administration and the Housing Loan Corporation, as well as the expansion of the highways system, facilitated homeownership in suburban areas. That is, Federal policy made accessible the dream of homeownership for the White population (Jackson 1985). The FHA irrevocably changed the contours of US cities. FHA regulations systematically excluded African Americans and other “minority” individuals and neighborhoods from access to capital, and so limited the possibility of property ownership. The ideology and practice of systematically devaluing non-white residential areas advanced by the National Real Estate Associations Board (NREAB) had organized as a private initiative in the early part of the century; under the FHA; it became public policy in the 1930’s. Jackson (1985) notes the following:

Even in the nation’s capital the outlying areas were considered more appropriate for federal assistance than older neighborhoods…few mortgage guarantees were issued in the predominately black central and southeastern sections of the District. (213)

51 Three key innovations facilitated middle class and working class access to homeownership: 1) low interest rates; 2) government subsidy; 3) creation of long-term, amortizing loans; 4) reduction in construction costs (Jackson 1985, 94).
The FHA’s declaration in 1939 that the District would become “populated by Negroes and the surrounding areas in Maryland and Virginia by white families,” became in Jane Jacobs’ words “a self-fulfilling prophecy” as a result of disinvestment and redlining (Jackson 1985, 212 - 213). The formal end of residential segregation through restrictive covenants in 1948 further spurred “white-flight” from the city.

**Efforts to Reclaim the Federal City, Renewal Meets Opposition**

By the 1930’s the concentration of what were seen as dilapidated black neighborhoods, including the infamous alley dwellings, around the city’s ceremonial core, had already become a perennial flashpoint (Gillette 2006, 160). These “blighted areas” produced through forced segregation and systematic disinvestment, were now being recast as in need of renewal and modernization. The goals to change land use patterns and create new housing, however, met with resistance from neighborhoods’ majority Black residents.

Yet, the enactment of the Alley Dwelling Act and the creation of the first local “Housing Authority” in 1937 lay the groundwork for the enactment of the Housing Act of 1949 and the creation of the Redevelopment Land Agency, which oversaw the controversial urban renewal strategies of the 1950’s and 1960’s (McGovern 1998, 139-150). By the 1950’s, post war Federal urban policy had cemented the “decline” of the District of Columbia’s inner city neighborhoods. Southwest Washington became a model for urban renewal around the country (Gillette 2006). The “pro-growth” coalition that emerged in support of urban renewal in downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods focused their discourse on articulating general economic goals such as “job creation and the expansion of the tax base” as well as on re-making the image of DC (Gillette 2006, 172). A brief look at the project serves to illustrate the deep social and political fissures that have molded successive governance regimes and local neighborhood politics in DC.
In the case of urban renewal in Southwest Washington, two oppositional discourses become apparent: one rooted in the City Beautiful tenets held that physical improvement and social recovery are correlated, the other reflective of the post reconstruction era called attention to the importance of preserving the social fabric of neighborhood life and issues of economic justice. The project as articulated by the RLA expressed the hopes of wedding suburban sensibilities to urban amenities and called for high to moderate income-housing for the selected area adjacent to the Capitol.

The Washington Board of Trade, the Committee of 100 and the all-white Federation of Citizens Association lent active support to this redevelopment vision and the representation of space it sought to implant. Their discourse is exemplified in a 1959 RLA report cited by Gillette (2006): “Here is an opportunity for persons to live who prefer the amenities of ...a highly convenient and attractive location to a long commuter’s journey to a larger suburb;” it would represent “suburban wholesomeness and urban stimulation,” a Washington architectural critic acclaimed (163). This discourse of urbanity, one that imbues the city with architectural sophistication and the corresponding amenities necessary to leading a cultured life, guides the Committee of 100 on the Federal City today as is evident in its publicly declared aim “to safeguard and advance the fundamental planning, environmental and aesthetic values inherited from the L'Enfant Plan and the McMillan Commission that give Washington its historic distinction, natural beauty and overall livability.”

At the time the Southwest area slated for redevelopment was 76% Black and contrary to the prevailing discourse of blight even in the words of the Redevelopment

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52 The Committee of 100, created in 1923, was an association of private citizens, including prominent business men who adhered to the principles of the City Beautiful Movement. The Washington Board of Trade was founded in 1865 by Shepherd and supported the coalition that ushered in territorial governance. (Gillette 2006, 124 and 59).

Land Agency’s report evidenced a “high level of residential stability” (Gillette 2006, 161). While local officials initially argued for the inclusion of low-income housing and mitigation of displacement, threats that the project would lose national funding sealed the deal -- complete redevelopment not rehabilitation prevailed (Gillette 2006, 162). The discourse of blight removal and urban rebirth triumphed, and, despite opposition from African American civic associations, the vast majority of the area was razed, making room for largely upper-income housing (Gillette 2006, 165). However, Southwest urban renewal in some respects marked the beginning of the end for wholesale redevelopment in DC.

While the Committee of 100 and other members of the coalition had supported the Southwest proposal to create an urban village worthy of the capital city, the committee along with prominent white residents began to organize opposition to the 1950 Comprehensive Plan, which called for extensive highway construction within District lines through not only predominately black neighborhoods in the Southwest and Southeast of the city but also through neighborhoods in the city’s majority white Northwest quadrant.

The fortuitous political alignments that halted large-scale demolition and redevelopment, nonetheless, were mismatched in that their long-term visions for the city and the appropriate means by which to attain this vision diverged sharply (McGovern 1998, 213). While the demands for local control and empowerment advanced by neighborhood activists achieved a brief period of ascendance in the 1960’s, the vision advanced by planning advocates with a largely white constituency comprised of planners, architects, and art historians, among others, whose aim was to revive the planning tradition embodied in the McMillan Plan, gained fairly permanent footing as evidenced in current planning directions. The representation of space articulated by this coalition predominates in contemporary plans, including the
downtown action agenda and July 2006 draft comprehensive plan; albeit, the means to achieve this vision have changed. Rather than wholesale razing and redevelopment of neighborhoods, managed conservation and selective redevelopment guide today’s plans.

Gale (1987) argues that the Georgetown “revival,” which became institutionalized through the establishment of a historic preservation district, demonstrated that deteriorating inner city neighborhoods and commercial corridors, thought to have become “obsolete,” could become zones of reinvestment and that this could be achieved without heavy-handed government intervention (54), thereby sparking the conception of a less invasive, more subtle strategy rooted in managed rehabilitation and foreshadowing the emergence of BIDs and the coalition of land-based and commercial interests they imply. However, this movement, Gale (1987) proffers, runs counter to aims of creating affordable housing for poor people due to the ideological linkage between “public” housing and property devaluation.54

**Decentralization and Empowerment: A Brief Interlude**

When image and action collude to produce an unjust social geography, the inherent contradictions of this spatial arrangement periodically break through the surface (Lefebvre 1991). By 1960 DC’s population was declining, and DC had become a majority African American City. Ironically, however, official racial desegregation also contributed to increasing out-migration of and economic disinvestment by the African American middle class in Shaw and other neighborhoods surrounding the downtown business districts. This out-migration accelerated after the 1968 riots, precipitating the further decline of many of DC’s neighborhoods.

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54 Discussions on the Adams Morgan listserv from 2006 still invoke this fear that subsidized housing negatively affects property values.
By the same token, in the 1960’s pressures from neighborhood activists and the civil rights movement forced a shift in planning paradigms. The cracks in the rational comprehensive model, which held that experts, such as government officials, planners and architects were most equipped to envision urban futures and lead urban development, to some measure opened up space for an insurgent paradigm, known as advocacy planning, to be partially implemented. During the 1960’s in an effort to diffuse tensions within neighborhoods, the Equal Economic Opportunities Act of 1964 and President Johnson’s “Great Society” and “War on Poverty” programs introduced the concept of institutionalized local level participation into national urban policy (Halpern 1995, Clavel et. al 1997, Vidal 1996).

The 1960’s riots (1964-1968) that shook cities across the country resulted from a confluence of factors, macroeconomic restructuring, Federal urban policy as well as systematic racial regulation rooted in ideological and cultural patterns; these converged into what has been termed the urban crisis (Katzenelson 1981, Halpern 1995). The urban crisis necessitated responses on the national, state, municipal and local levels. Government reaction to the upheaval of the 1960’s has been characterized as a dual strategy of appeasement and demobilization (Katzenelson 1981). The strategy was fashioned around the principles of decentralization and devolution as Federal policies acceded to activists’ demands for greater participation in urban development and neighborhood revitalization processes affecting their life world (Keating and Krumholz 1999).

Programs, such as the “grey areas program,” initiated in 1959, which became influential in shaping the “War on Poverty” in the mid 1960’s, had introduced the notion of community participation in local social service provision. The War on Poverty programs, however, explicitly by-passed municipal governments and called for the participation and direct Federal funding of community-based organizations.
Yet, the War on Poverty community action program (CAP), which constituted a minor program in relation to the Great Society legislation,55 Halpern (1995) argues, effected little long term change. To the contrary, increasing demand for participation in setting planning and program agendas, revealed the tension within the program itself. While the stated aim was participation and local empowerment, administrators within the public bureaucracy overseeing the programs became increasingly uneasy about relinquishing control to local leaders (117). These programs, furthermore, demonstrated the inability of policy makers and planners to redress the structural inequities wrought by racism, the concentration of poverty, as well as unequal access to economic opportunities (100). The local focus of the programs distributed limited resources to geographically circumscribed neighborhoods but never aimed to effect societal change through redistributinal policies.

In DC, the Shaw neighborhood became one of the first demonstration projects in DC to implement a participatory, comprehensive redevelopment process, implementing anti-poverty strategies that integrated housing, health, education and workforce initiatives (Halpern 1995). The organization, the Model Inner City Community Development Organization (MICCO), leading the efforts was incorporated in 1965 and led by Rev. Walter Fauntroy, a well-known civil rights leader. Initially, community leaders sought the empowerment of the population with regard to the development of neighborhood plans and their dealings with planning functionaries. MICCO built a coalition of local 150 organizations (Gilette 2006, 175).

55 Great Society programs, such as Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare as well as Food Stamps are cited as having had a profound impact on certain sectors of the populations, particularly in the alleviation of poverty of the elderly. However, most of the transfers from this program were not captured by the poor (Halpern 1995, 115).
In Shaw, a community refrain sounded the following tone of solidarity and hope:

Old Southwest, it lost the fight.
Old Southwest, did the thing wrong.
Shaw will work as one big team.
Tenants, unions, workers all
We’ll unite our Shaw to plan. (Cited in Gillette 2006, 175)

The verse’s obvious condemnation of the top-down, business-led urban renewal policies contrasts sharply with the upbeat and hopeful call to collective action. More crucially, the discourse of participation and empowerment became officially legitimized and incorporated into policy-making. The participatory experiment in Shaw, however, also brought to the forefront the internal neighborhood power struggles that would emerge in communities where access even to a small resource base was, nevertheless, seen as taking a step closer to the power structure. Also, the realization by local communities that they could compete for resources to separately develop programs facilitated the fracturing of community building efforts (Gillette 2006, Halpern 1995).

The empowerment component that characterized the War on Poverty’s community action program (CAP), furthermore, became muted and transformed into the concept of self-help and self-sufficiency during the late 1960’s and 1970’s. In the late 60’s and early 1970’s, Model Cities superseded the community action programs. Under the Model Cities programs, funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), resources for local organizations became channeled through the municipal government structure (Halpern 1995, 118). Model Cities also re-professionalized community development with its focus on coordinated and comprehensive planning through linked institutions, from the Federal, through the
State and municipal levels to community organizations (118). This trend to circumscribe and channel participation was further institutionalized during the Nixon administration. One, of the legacies of this period, is the community development corporations, whose earlier radical roots were reframed as “promoters of capitalism [rather than] community developers” under the Nixon administration (Halpern 1995, 138).

The transmutation of progressive political demands into ideals of individual and community entrepreneurialism became the rationalization for reframing urban policy. The inherent contradiction of these successive neighborhood-based economic development programs is rooted in the paradoxical intent to meld community empowerment and self reliance. The final incarnation of the CDC achieved the demobilization of radicalism and the incorporation of community leaders into the political structure. The values of self-reliance and locally focused entrepreneurialism resonated with the African American intellectual tradition of DuBois and Garvey56 as well as within the dominant white political and cultural frame of reference. Yet, while the CDC model met with little opposition, it failed to confront the reality of the urban economic restructuring taking place on the international scale as well (Cummings 2002).

Although these successive programs neither addressed the underlying causes of poverty in urban neighborhoods nor fulfilled the demands for local control, they did train a cadre of local community leaders in the art of planning, managing, and administering social service and neighborhood-based economic development programs. These programs, Halpern (1995) posits, “planted the seed for the eventual

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56 Cummings (2002) in tracing the “genealogy of market-based community economic development” argues that the shift toward market ideology was so effective is because it resonated with such diverse and to some extent contradictory currents of thought.
emergence of a Black municipal bureaucracy in many cities,” including Washington, DC (115).

**Chocolate City an Elusive Dreamscape, the Limitation on Home Rule**

On April 4, 1968 DC burned. The riot of 1968 followed on the heels of the 1965 Watts riot in Los Angeles and insurrections in other major cities, such as Detroit, Michigan and Newark, New Jersey. To some extent for the Johnson administration officials, the riots were unexpected (Gillette 2006). Johnson had appointed a Black mayor and majority council in 1967. On the Federal level policies had been enacted to expand both political rights and economic opportunities; as such, African Americans in DC were perceived to be comparatively well off with a sizable middle class due to increased access to civil service employment. At the same time, federal officials had attempted to avert the violence that had shaken other cities in 1965 through the funding of targeted programs. Yet, self determination had been thwarted and de facto segregation prevailed (Jaffe and Sherwood 1994). The contradictory economic, social and political policies, ostensibly to produce a capital city worthy of admiration and reflective of the democratic ideals, had fallen victim to its own hubris and had produced a “city [and region] divided,” embodying within it the seeds of its own destruction. Large tracts of downtown and ironically of the formerly vibrant African American commercial and residential areas, including Shaw and Columbia Heights adjacent to Adams Morgan and Mount Peasant, lay smoldering.

One of the key players during the months leading up to the riots, which also marked his initial appearance on the DC political stage, was Marion Barry, a civil rights activist who had come to Washington to lead the Student Non-Violent Organizing Committee (Jaffe and Sherwood 1994). Barry had “a sharp mind” and excelled at “populist’ political organizing” (Gillette 2006, 191). In 1966 he organized a highly successful and visible bus boycott as well as the Free DC movement, which
confronted the white conservative coalition blocking home-rule. And, in 1967 with the help of federal officials, particularly Labor Secretary Wirtz, Barry and associates organized Pride Incorporated, a program designed to appease young African American men, “the hard core unemployed,” --as identified by Wirtz --, “the tough teenagers in the doo rags who gathered on street corner” --as described by Jaffe and Sherwood--, who were seen as a potential threat to the city (Jaffe and Sherwood 1994, 53).

In 1973, five years after the riots, DC achieved home-rule, albeit limited. Marion Barry’s election in 1978 marked another, dramatic shift in the political regime of the city (Siegel 1997, 100). Not only could DC residents elect their municipal government, but for many, DC -- dubbed Chocolate City (CC) -- had become the potential fulfillment of a dreamscape:

Chocolate City was a metaphorical utopia where black folk’s majority status was translated into an assertion of self-consciousness, self-determination and self-confidence (Carrol 1998)57

Yet, DC, the entire city not just selective areas, like so many other Northeastern cities, was simultaneously being ideologically branded —outside the city itself— as “black, urban and dangerous” (Modan 2007). Because DC was never controlled internally, ultimately, this outside public perception is the one that has come to repeatedly influence policy.

For some, the riots signified another kind of turning point in DC, namely the ascendance of an urban regime characterized by a “mix of black nationalism and economic leftism” (Siegel 1997, 76) that became riddled by divisive racial politics and corruption (Siegel 1997, 77). While this view blames the decline of the District of Columbia largely on the misguided governance of Barry and his “political machine,”

DC and its neighborhoods had already been shaped by national urban policies and their local expressions: residential segregation, suburbanization, disinvestment and a limited form of home-rule.\(^{58}\)

So, just when the injured city needed the infusion of confidence, more importantly, the ability to gain a fiscal foothold, the terms of home-rule, hobbled the city government’s revenue-raising ability. The most damaging regulation became the prohibition on collecting income tax from commuters earning a salary in DC and the inability to tax 42% of the properties within its boundaries allocated to the federal government, non-profits and international ambassadorial properties.\(^{59}\) Additionally, Congress maintained oversight over the budget as well as review of local legislation, thereby symbolically placing it under congressional tutelage and strategically limiting the city’s political independence.

**Decentralizing Entrepreneurialism**

Home rule in DC finally created locally elected Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANC), ostensibly giving neighborhood level representation to the city’s residents and providing a venue through which to participate in the day to day planning of the city. ANCs were initially purported to become the representative voice and vehicles for neighborhood empowerment. Their powers were subsequently diluted as they were given only advisory powers, albeit important ones in terms of securing quality of life issues, such as land-use and zoning decisions as well as controlling liquor licenses and other nuisance ordinances.\(^{60}\) ANCs, however, were

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\(^{58}\) Reed (1999), in contrast to Siegel, situates black urban regimes that emerged during this time-period as follows: “The regime forms and legitimizes itself (that is, establishes its credibility as a contender for power, build their allegiance required for winning office and governing, and articulates its policy agenda) in a local political culture and system dominated hegemonically by the imperatives of the very ‘growth machine’ that is the engine of black marginalization” (Reed 1999, 99).

\(^{59}\) The “commuter tax, in the view of the Brookings Institute is warranted given that DC functions both as a State as well as a municipality.

\(^{60}\) In 1995, their power was further scaled back when commissioners were no longer allowed to question and or cross-examine applicants for development projects (McGovern 1998).
never allocated the resources necessary to engage in community economic
development.

Instead, neighborhood revitalization in low-income, struggling neighborhoods
became the purview of CDCs, funded under the community development block grant
(CDBG) programs created under the Housing and Community Development Act of
1974. The Act integrated community-based organizations, such as CDCs, into a
complex funding hierarchy; and, community-based organizations were forced to align
their work with federal, state and municipal policy priorities. These organizations,
consequently, increasingly faced the reality that they had to leverage funding, thus,

Neighborhood power and local governance as a result were simultaneously inhibited
through national as well as local policies (McGovern 1998).

By the 1980’s the DC government became inserted into a sea change of
national urban policy framed by neoliberal discourses, wherein (once again) racialized
stereotypes were prominently used to legitimize cut backs in public sector spending on
welfare and housing while devolving responsibility for these programs to the state and
local levels (Bangura 2000, Cummings 2002). While The Housing and Community
Development Act devolved responsibility for community development to states and
local municipalities, thereby changing the novel, short-lived, direct link between the
Federal government and local communities that had emerged in the 1960’s (Halpern
1995). The 1980’s, under Reagan, then brought on sharp cuts in aid to urban areas.

Cummings (2002) argues that “in addition to curtailed social programs and
heightened economic insecurity for the poor, one of the main legacies of the
Bush/Reagan years was the increasing importance of market-oriented CDCs in local
revitalization efforts” (425). Consequently, CDCs sought ways to leverage their
efforts by courting private sector actors and by focusing on commercial revitalization initiatives. Furthermore, CDCs in DC became implicated Barry’s patronage system

**Downtown Development, Historic Preservation, and Urban Regeneration**

Contrary to Siegel’s analysis of a leftist regime, the Barry instead ventured to create a “pro-growth” coalition, working closely with downtown business, particularly with downtown real estate interests (McGovern 1998, Reed 1999, Jaffe and Sherwood 1994). He quickly sought linkages to the White power structure, courting downtown commercial interests and developers. Additionally, Barry’s particular style in managing the “growth machine” was marked by the individual, tight control he sought to exert over the process of downtown development (Jaffe and Sherwood 2003, Barras 1998).

Barry was also greatly influenced by his political understanding of the historical inter- and intra-racial cleavages in DC. This knowledge enable Barry to exploit differences and racially constructed fears, which, in turn, continued to hinder coalition building across color lines as well as across class divisions within the African American community (Gillette 2006, Jaffe and Sherwood 1994).

With the expansion of employment opportunities in the DC government as well as the institution of “minority” contracting government procurement rules, Barry, moreover, secured a loyal following among sectors of the African American population who became the explicit beneficiaries of affirmative action policies (Reed 1999). At the same time, his development policies supported a spatial practice that privileged office development along the new central business district as well as incentives to create amenities for tourists and conventioneers in the old downtown area.

Opposition, particularly to his “flexible” downtown redevelopment policies in the 1980’s, emerged from two camps: 1) neighborhood activists in the surrounding
neighborhoods—today’s central-city planning area—fearing displacement and 2) “planning advocates,” with the Committee of 100 as a key actor, who had taken the helm of historic preservation and sought a predictable development path through the vehicle of the comprehensive plan (McGovern 1998). For the former, largely majority African American lower-income communities, the period of hope initiated under the CAP programs had long run out; many DC low-income and poor neighborhoods reeled from the effects of middle-class abandonment, drug violence and homelessness.

Planning advocates, however, used their political influence on locally elected neighborhood bodies, the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANC), to prevent over-development in the predominately white, upper-middle class Northwest quadrant, which remained largely insulated from the deteriorating conditions in other parts of the city. These efforts to secure the residential integrity of certain neighborhoods and downtown historic buildings, as well as the continued lobbying to incorporate these values in a revised comprehensive plan strengthened the neighborhood preservation movement, thereby securing the historic patrimony of DC’s unique urban fabric in terms of the built environment. Historic districting and down-zoning at the same time supported the expansion of private reinvestment initiatives that had proven so successful in Georgetown (Gale 1987).

Yet, by 1990, DC had also been notoriously labeled the murder capital of the US and many of its African American neighborhoods ravaged by the crack epidemic, violence and the downtown boom had collapsed (Gillette 2006). During the 1980’s, furthermore, the demographic composition of DC was beginning to alter as international immigrants increasingly moved into neighborhoods, practically in the shadows of the White House, only a walk up 16th Street. These immigrants of which Latinos were the most visible and numerous, however, found little political space to insert themselves into the municipal power structures. As many of the Latino
immigrants were refugees from Central American countries ravaged by US supported civil wars, most were undocumented. Thus, their economic situation as a group was defined by precariousness. The failure of the DC government to respond to the specific needs of this population (such as bilingual health services and education as well as affordable housing options), intensified intra-neighborhood and inter racial competition and conflicts. In 1991 the Mount Pleasant riot, largely perceived as a Latino riot, pointed to emergent tensions in the changing demographic profile of the city.

By 1995, the city plunged into fiscal crisis. This precipitated the takeover of the city’s management by a Financial Control Board and severed Barry’s control over the mayoralty. The majority of the population, (Barras (1998) argues, had grown tired of the racial politics that had characterized his long reign. At the same time, Barras (1998) acknowledges, that even as Barry lost support and legitimacy, his detailed knowledge of DC’s finances and power structure led the Financial Control Board to incorporate some of his earlier recommendations and analyses it had initially eschewed. The Control Board instituted painful measures to balance the budget, while at the same time investing resources in professionalizing DC government agencies, upgrading technology and creating oversight agencies.

In the next chapter, I specifically address the institutionalization of entrepreneurial governance, precipitated by the takeover of the city by the Financial Control Board in 1995. While Barry’s regime has been characterized as a “growth machine,” it is under the control board that governance networks to institutionalize the partnership between the private sector and government agencies became formalized. I argue that the social inequities that have been created in DC, and that I have described at such length, continue to shape the contemporary period in both ideologically and practically.
CHAPTER 6
FISCAL CRISIS, ENTREPRENEURIAL GOVERNANCE,
AND THE EMERGENCE OF BIDS

Mass suburbanization since the 1950s has made it unreasonable to expect that most middle class men and women will want to live in cities. But developing small places within the city as sites of visual delectation creates urban oases where everyone appears to be middle class. (Zukin 1995, 134)

Washington DC, its contemporary post-Fordist landscape, is being produced simultaneously on a palimpsest of racial inequities, spatial segregation, selective disinvestment, increasing demographic diversity and the post World War II international hegemony of the US (Manning 1998). As the seat of the Federal government, the new post war international order signified the influx of institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and Inter-American Development Bank, which have occupied newly developed buildings in the old and new downtown districts, creating an influx of international professionals. The accompanying embassies located on Massachusetts Avenue\(^6\) spurred the revitalization and gentrification of the central city neighborhoods, particularly the Dupont Circle area, and the surrounding neighborhoods (Manning 1998, Gale 1987). At the same time, as cold war policies wreaked havoc in countries across the globe, Central American refugees and other immigrant groups increasingly sought a better future in the shadows of the Capitol. And, economic refugees from countries reeling from the effect of globalized trade and the new international division of labor continue to flow into the DC metropolitan area everyday (Manning 1998).

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\(^6\) Massachusetts Avenue forms the northern boundary of the adjacent business districts.
In the two decades from 1950 to 1970 the population as well as the geographic area of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) tripled (Manning 1998, 336). The position of the city in the region, however, declined significantly, both in terms of population numbers and in terms of the changing landscape of jobs (O’Cleireacain 1997). By 1990 the majority of jobs were located in the suburban area, 64% of jobs within the MSA were located outside of the District of Columbia (Manning 1998, 343). Adding insult to injury, over two-thirds of the jobs within the District were held by non-District residents (Shapiro and Bowers 2003, Manning 1998).

In the mid-1990’s DC faced a political and fiscal crisis. O’Cleireacain (1997) concludes that this crisis and its symptomatic “fiscal problems stem largely from its nature as the nation’s capital” (6). O’Cleireacain (1997) specifically examines the District’s structural constraints and notes that 1) the city’s inability to determine an adequate tax structure in relation to the municipal as well as state services it must provide and 2) the inadequacy as well as instability of Federal payments made to the city hobble the city’s ability to balance its budget while providing crucial services. Recommendations hinged on rectifying these distortions that were straining the city’s budget; however, even today the Federal payments do not accurately reflect the loss of revenues; nor has the city been enabled to collect a commuter tax.

A general consensus emerged among planners, government officials, research institutes, and citizen advocates that DC’s future hinged on its ability to attract residents, retail and business. To do this DC had to create a dynamic downtown neighborhood (adding a residential component) as well as conserve its historically protected human scale and its aesthetically remarkable and architecturally significant residential neighborhoods.62 BIDs were conceived as one effective tool to manage the

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62 Interview: Executive Staff, Office of Economic Development, April 2006.
restructuring of city spaces, such as downtown, and to create the accompanying image campaign necessary to attract and hold professionals in the city.

**Strategies to Reinvigorate Urban Markets**

BIDs were enabled in 1996. The Control Board and, subsequently, the William’s administration, have focused on strategies to increase efficiency and competition to implement public-private partnership. To some extent this constituted an understandable reaction to corruption and cronyism that developed during the successive Barry administrations. Additionally, the expansion of the municipal agencies engaged in comprehensive planning for the city is a positive development. At the same time, the increasing reliance on public-private partnerships, such as BIDs, begs the question as to how and to what aims public resources are deployed as well as how participation in DC’s revival is structured.

The formalization of public-private partnerships to plan, manage and implement the city’s place-oriented economic development strategies commenced in 1995 with the formation of the Interactive Downtown Task Force (IDTF). The Interactive Downtown Task Force articulated the vision of a vibrant downtown with an arts district, which included plans to connect downtown through the 7th, 9th, 11th and 14th street corridors to the National Mall. Under the auspices of the Control Board and at the behest of the IDTF, Congress gave the DC council the authority to

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64 The IDTF Chair, Herb Miller, is a major developer in DC and close ally of the Barry administration, since 1982. His corporation’s investments in the downtown Gallery Place project often cited as the anchoring project for the downtown revival was subsidized through TIF. As such, it is difficult to separate private benefit from public good. See, James, Jones, “Miller Time.” Loose Lips, *Washington City Paper*, May 5, 2006, accessed http://www.washingtontcypaper.com/lips/2006/lips0505.html on March 22, 2007
delegate economic development powers to “an approved District instrumentality.”

These included the ability to enable Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, through which the city could issue taxable and tax-exempt bonds (Maszcz, Gross and Porter 1997). The oversight of TIF districts, accordingly, can be devolved to private organizations, such as the sales-tax TIF, for example, which is being managed by the Downtown DC BID. These tools have enabled DC to subsidize and attract investment by private sector developers and real property owners, who in turn have been given direct management powers to implement their vision of place.

What was the reason for the BID? The District needed to “create a hospitable environment that looks clean” was the consensus among city officials in the Deputy Mayor’s Office for Economic Development and Planning, the Department of Transportation as well and the Office of Planning as well as BID executives. One BID executive explained, “we had to disabuse retailers of the mythologies of urban areas and convince them to adapt their suburban model to denser populations.” The District also did not have the capacity -- neither the financial resources nor the professional staff -- to accomplish what the BIDs projected to accomplish. The city needed to find ways to leverage its resources. On October 20, 1997, the Legal Times published an article by Stephen Porter, member of the IDTF, which proclaimed “Stirrings of Hope for Downtown DC…Despite the Districts recent crises, hope now abounds…Washington DC is one of the few cities in the world poised to capture the defining market forces of the 21st century.” The article laid out the tools available to the public-private partnerships that had been enabled through both the TIF and BID legislation. One BID executive asserted that “people are establishing BIDs because it

\[\text{65 District of Columbia Bond Financing Improvements Act of 1997.}\]
\[\text{66 Interview: Executive Staff, Office of Economic Development, April 2006.}\]
is prerequisite to competition.” He emphasized the downtown BID’s imperative to create retail markets and office markets that could compete with suburban jurisdictions while not undermining other commercial districts within the city limits.

Planners in the city’s public agencies were also generally enthusiastic about the role BIDs play in DC’s revitalization. By leveraging crucial resources, the existence or non-existence of BIDs also shapes public investment patterns. Capitol Hill and Adams Morgan, for example, were slated for major public investment through the Great Streets Program because they have BIDs. The criteria for District government investment were cited as “potential for sustainability” and “readiness” to ensure that “the strategic investment is successful.” An official in the Deputy Mayor’s Office of Economic Development and Planning reflected that a shift had occurred wherein programs were increasingly developed around concepts of “self-help” rather than “neighborhood entitlement.”

Today the governance of economic development in large areas of the city is coordinated through a network of actors, including city agencies (Department of Transportation, Deputy Mayor’s Office of Economic Development and Planning, and Office of Planning, being the main agencies) non-profit agencies formed to aggressively market the city (Washington, DC Economic Partnership, Washington, DC Convention and Tourism Corporation and Cultural Tourism DC) and the Downtown DC BID, whose main members are the commercial property owners and developers. The following statement from the website of the Washington DC Economic Partnership illustrates the desire to break with the past:

67 Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
68 Interview: Great Streets Project Coordinator, District Department of Transportation, June 2006.
69 Interview: Great Streets Project Coordinator, District Department of Transportation, June 2006.
70 Interviews: Coordinator of the Restore DC and Mainstreet Program, April 2006
We have come to a junction where the old themes and ways of doing things have encountered the persistent problems and challenges facing our city. We now must endeavor to find new strategies and tactics that fully leverage both human and financial capital resources. It will be a journey of discovery and one that we intend to approach with a great deal of vigor. Our fellow travelers include the Downtown Business Improvement District; Office of Planning; DC Commission on Arts and Humanities; Washington Convention and Tourism Corporation; Greater Washington Initiative; and Social Compact.\(^7\)

BIDs in DC are not only about making particular places. The work of the Downtown BID DC in collaboration with city agencies and the aforementioned non-profit as well as business groups is to coordinate, to spearhead, and to provide leadership in planning Washington, DCs development. One of the executives of both the Downtown BID and Mt Vernon Triangle BID describes the work of BIDs as follows:

Some things we can’t do, we provide leadership on them. [For example] the downtown is zoned for residential since 1991 but it’s not happening. Why? Well we’ve got to bring them now but how do we bring them now? Maybe if we had a slight tax-abatement for people to take a little bit of the risk out, they’d do it. So let’s try that. We sort of solved that problem by providing the leadership. Likewise on retail…So Eisenhower does the highways, people moving out to the suburbs, cheap land out there, no one is charging for the gas bill…So how do we put together the leadership for TIF (tax increment financing) for downtown? We have to play more of an active role. We were

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talking earlier about putting together a list of 40 retailers…but Georgetown has retail and Friendship Heights; you don’t want to compete with them. The initiatives are impressive, and the aim of creating a livable, inclusive city laudable. Yet, the question remains as to who will be able to afford “living’ and/or “playing” in these places. Community responses to the Mayor’s July 2006 Draft Comprehensive Plan reiterated a generalized deep concerns with regard to both affordable housing and the quality of jobs being created in DC.  

The conceptualization of development, underlying the economic development and governance model institutionalized through BIDs and their partnership coalition, is that “growth” through the creation of jobs will “lift all boats.” One BID executive explained the leadership role of the private sector in the process of stimulating and managing the fruits of growth.

Other leadership includes, yes, there is development downtown, you can see the cranes, but what about the poor people, we need to make sure that our guys understand the need to connect economic development downtown with the rest of the city, whether it’s affordable housing, schools and jobs. Basically we, the business community, has sort of divided up, the schools have gone to the Federal City Council, which is sort of a high end business organization, job training has gone to the Chamber of Commerce, and we sort of took along with another organization DCBIA affordable housing …. We’ve got to help the city make the connection from economic development downtown -- the tax revenues -- to jobs, get them out to the neighborhoods…

72 “Affordable housing “emerged as a primary concern among district residents during the 2001 neighborhood planning processes as well as the citizen input garnered during the Comprehensive Plan revision process.
73 Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
Yet, a study, commissioned for the Office of Planning, concluded that the District receives a limited fiscal boost from additional job creation. Therefore one avenue of revenue growth, as argued by professional planners and economists, is to increase the population, and with it the pool of taxable income (Shapiro and Bowers 2003, 17). This finding coincides with the recommendations advanced by the Brookings Institution in 1998. The goal articulated by this report is to increase the District’s population by 100,000 residents by the year 2010. This strategy has been enshrined in the Mayor’s July 2006 Draft Comprehensive Plan. BIDs have been created to develop places in which these new residents might venture to invest.

Shapiro and Bowers (2003) posit that due to the city’s perceived dismal public education system, “new residents will, through self-selection, primarily consist of childless individuals and couples, empty nesters, and the very wealthy for whom private education is not an issue” (Shapiro and Bowers 2003, 17). One of the key strategies to capture new residents, Shapiro and Bower (2003) assert in the report, is to “complement and extend Washington’s tourist and city beautiful” amenities to redefine its common perception as a “home of bureaucrats and poor people” (Shapiro and Bowers, 18).

**Enabling Business Improvement Districts**

Until 1996, with the takeover of the Financial control Board and political shifts on the City Council, it was not clear that the elected government would sanction the institutionalization of BIDs.

Before 1996, however, BID enabling legislation faltered twice. The legislation failed to move through the City Council in 1989 and again in 1992. In 1994/1995, nonetheless, the Downtown coalition redeveloping the site of the MCI –now Verizon-Center and the Georgetown Business and Professional Association (GBPA), who had stood behind the initial attempts to enable BIDs in DC, resubmitted their applications.
At first, Council members refused to reconsider because “they had [previously] put a lot of energy into it without figuring out how to do it.”74 It took rewriting the legislation, political maneuvering, negotiation and finally a move from the taxation writing committee to the economic development committee for the legislation to get out of committee and go before the City Council for a vote – it was a positive one.

The establishment of BIDs in DC, as indicated by the political process, was a controversial endeavor. Elected officials on the DC council as well as administration executives, while in theory in favor of BIDs, questioned key aspects of the BID form. One government official summed it up thus: “we wanted to think about what constitutes a ‘majority’ when imposing a mandatory assessment.” That is, how many property owners should have to agree to form the BID after which the rest are required to comply? And, secondly, “what is the role of government?”75 How much control over its development would the city relinquish? And, what direct role would government agencies play in the management and monitoring of BIDs? Other officials in interviews cited their continued unease with BIDs as being related to the potential negative impact on small businesses, particularly “mom and pop” stores, already under financial stress.76 It is not surprising then that the BID concept also faced strident opposition from residents, small merchants, the vending community and homeless advocates.77 These activists’ concerns were not without foundation and found allies on the City Council (Wolf 2006).

74 Interview: Deputy Executive Director, Economic Development at the Downtown DC BID and staff Director of the Economic Development Committee, City Council in 1996. July 2006.
75 Interview Executive Staff, Office of Economic Development, April 2006.
76 Interviews: Coordinator of the Restore DC and Mainstreet Program, April 2006; Program Manager, Retore DC, September 2006.
By 1996, political opportunity structures (Tarrow 1992), however, favored BID advocates; the city had fallen into fiscal crisis, the governance of the city had been delegated largely to the Control Board, and the DC Council membership had changed. Changes on the DC council, from the vantage point of the Downtown BID executives I interviewed, have brought to power council members more pragmatic in their outlook, thereby moving the Council away from its left-leaning tendencies.78

One Downtown DC BID executive, who in 1996 was staff director of the DC Council’s Economic Development Committee, -- the person who rewrote the legislation and devised the political strategy to have it enacted -- notes, “we were in such bad shape…things were so bad that there was a lot of pressure to try anything.”79

At the same time, by 1996, the vision of the Interactive Downtown Task Force (IDTF) appointed by the Mayor in 1995 became more closely aligned with that of the preservationist movement who had led efforts to halt the expansion of downtown office development into adjacent neighborhoods and to require land-marking in downtown. The IDTF developed a plan for downtown that focused on creating the kind of shopping, cultural, entertainment as well as residential district that would attract people back into DC’s downtown and create a 24/7 urban place.80

The Geography of BIDs in DC

Pro-growth coalitions and cooperation with the private sector, particularly with the land-based business community, however, represent a leitmotif in the history of Washington, DC’s development. BIDs represent another incarnation of this trajectory. The post-control board regime has institutionalized an interesting coalition of preservationists, planning advocates, such as the Committee of 100, major real estate

78 Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
79 Interview: Deputy Executive Director, Economic Development at the Downtown DC BID and staff Director of the Economic Development Committee, City Council in 1996. July 2006.
interests and city agencies as well as neighborhood actors. Yet, the place-focused and geographically targeted strategies that BIDs implement, which has effectively remade downtown DC, are simultaneously being used to deepen the privately led gentrification process in adjacent neighborhoods (Gale 1987). Through the BID structure, DC’s government effectively allows the private sector to mitigate its risk by relinquishing management of place-making and redevelopment areas to BID organizations.\(^8\)

The evolving geography of BIDs in DC suggests they will come to dominate the urban landscape, particularly in target areas, such as the downtown, central city and mid-city planning areas, of which the case studies form a part. Interestingly, questions I raised about the projected spatial distribution of BIDs met with mixed responses from both BID executive and even more cautious ones from senior staff in the Deputy Mayor’s Office for Economic Development and Planning (DMOEDP), the agency responsible for overseeing the establishment of BIDs. The BID executive who expressed reserve about the spread of BIDs to neighborhoods commercial corridors worried that the Downtown DC BID might lose oversight as it moves away from directly assisting neighborhood groups to organize BIDs, such as has been the case in Capitol Hill and Adams Morgan. He explains:

> when there were two or three of us; it’s funny, we got started first, and then the second one got started; and we were very actively lobbying the second one on how they should be; and then when the third one got started, we consulted with them on how they should be; and then with the fourth, we sort lost patience and interest and, we were busy with other things. But at some point, some small group is going to get a BID, and they are going to figure out a way to get

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\(^8\) Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
it started. And, maybe they’re not going to be so clean, like the misuse of funds, and they’re going to do something wrong, or there are going to be some accusations against them. And, there is going to be this tidal wave that washes over all of the BIDs, in terms of trying to spot-light us, and so the government is going to send auditors into each one of us to see what else they can find so that they can make it a cause….  

In the case of the BID executive, then, the fear expressed, is related to the issue of institutional self-preservation. Government officials, on the other hand, related their reserve in relation to the effect of BIDs on small merchants, “mom and pop” stores, whose livelihoods could be threatened by the revalorization of property values and increases in commercial leases associated with the establishment of BIDs.  

A visual, cartographic representation of the spatial expansion of BIDs, published by the Downtown Action Agenda, of which the Downtown DC BID is a part, shows the dramatic increase in the use of BIDs: from no BID in 1996 to BIDs covering contiguous areas from the downtown radiating outward into the mid-city planning area (See Maps 1-4). The map, available to be published that was furnished by the DMOEDP, while illustrating a more cautious view, nevertheless, showed a similar trajectory (See Map 5).

The Business Improvement Districts in DC, as currently established and planned, encompass precisely the zone that has historically been slated for renewal and revitalization (McGovern 1998, Gale 1987), namely, the old downtown district and the adjacent inner city to mid-city neighborhoods. Most of these neighborhoods have experienced a dramatic demographic shift from majority black populations to

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82 Interview: Deputy Executive Director, Economic Development, Downtown DC BID, July 2006  
83 Interview: Coordinator of ReStore DC, Deputy Mayor’s Office for Planning and Economic Development, April 2006

increasingly majority white ones (Gale 1987, McGovern 1998). Since the neighborhoods are contiguous, they form a buffer around the downtown area.

The BID geography also covers those areas that burned in 1968 and those areas offering development potential, such as the Waterfront. It also concentrates in those neighborhoods within central-city and mid-city planning areas where private individually-led gentrification first took hold in the 1970s and 1980’s. The geography of BIDs, furthermore, incorporates areas where large-scale projects have been completed, are underway or are in the planning stage. These include the Verizon Center, which underwrote the enabling of the Downtown BID in 1997, the Mt Vernon Triangle mixed use development, the Anacostia Water Front development, and the

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84 Georgetown experienced private sector initiated transition earlier, first initiated in the late 1920’s (see Gale 1987). The following in operation: Georgetown, Golden Triangle, Mt Vernon Triangle, Adams Morgan and Capitol Hill. BIDs at different stages in the planning process: West Foggy Bottom, Dupont Circle, 14th Street, Columbia Heights, and NOMA (North of Massachusetts) and M Street Southeast.
Columbia Heights development.\textsuperscript{85} In sum, these areas now comprise a zone where new residents, not as “pioneering” as the preceding generation of “gentrifiers,” might be willing to venture if security and cleaning services as well as an adequate commercial environment were secured and guaranteed (Gale 1987).\textsuperscript{86}

BIDs, when viewed from this vantage point, could be seen as vehicles to entrench the simultaneous processes of downtown focused development and the privately, individually driven and more elusive process of residential gentrification that Gale (1987) identified in 1987. The Georgetown process, Gale (1987) posits, reverberated positively among those middle class and elite sectors of the population who wished to stay or return to the city. Urban revitalization could be accomplished, maybe not through heavy-handed public intervention, but through private sector commitment. These sectors of the population, who, particularly, in DC would identify themselves as politically progressive rather than conservative, and who tend to be active in local politics (McGovern 1998), nonetheless, express representations of urban space that focus on amenities, such as open space, recreational and cultural opportunities and convenience.

The geography of BIDs indicates that they are institutionalized to serve both the imperative of land-based capital to enhance the exchange value of its property investment and the interests of those who want to ensure a way of urban life that promises security, convenience as well as investment in property. In the context of DC, BIDs then, seem to represent the implantation of a spatial practice whereby private sector actors in partnership with DC government agencies create

\textsuperscript{85} In the case of the Columbia Heights and the 14\textsuperscript{th} and U Street corridors, for example, redevelopment has been catalyzed through major public investment, such as the extension of the metro and the redevelopment around the metro stations.

\textsuperscript{86} Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
“neighborhood” districts by developing new residential communities and securing existing ones.

This spatial practice synthesizes into what Smith (2002) has termed third-wave gentrification.

Third-Wave Gentrification has evolved into a vehicle transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes that pioneer a comprehensive class-inflected urban remake…What marks the latest phase of gentrification in many cities, therefore, is that a new amalgam of corporate and state powers and practices has been forged…(Smith 2002, 443)

As has historically been the case in DC, these policies are not only class but also race-inflected because they do not address historical patterns of exclusion and resulting, skewed patterns of wealth creation.

**So, who is invited?**

Given the political constellation in DC and the well-spring of economic power, development in DC has followed a pro-growth strategy. The coalition that has emerged since the take-over of the Control Board envisions Washington, DC as the destination for international investment, tourism and new residents of the professional class. Through the BID structure DC’s government effectively allows the private sector to manage this economic development strategy.

The Committee of 100 and other advocates had long lobbied for a representation of urban space closely reflective of the vision of the “living” downtown drawn up by the IADTF. And, downtown can now boast newly created condominiums; yet, the new downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods in image
and as well as in bricks and mortar have been remade as a haven for young professionals, the so oft-cited “creative class.”

This is the class targeted by the marketing literature sent to potential new residents and tourists. Re-imaging campaigns, such as the one encountered on the website of the Downtown DC BID, portray a “Downtown DC launched on a meteoric ascent to world class prominence, diversity and excitement.” On the same page the Downtown BID declares:

Downtown is now DC's hottest new residential neighborhood, dining destination and the cultural and entertainment center of the region. Here you'll find busy streets, bustling stores, happening restaurants and bars, new condos, movie theaters, museums, galleries.

The main focus of the representations, nonetheless, is on the aesthetics of places, buildings and architecture as well as on consumer and cultural activities and not on the working-class people laboring behind the scenes to maintain the space, nor on those who currently live in adjoining neighborhoods. Rather, the marketing materials sent to me and posted on the website of the various organizations involved in marketing DC’s regeneration, furthermore, (when they include pictures of people rather than architecture) portray individuals who are professional and clean cut-looking, engaged in consumer activities, such as sitting at out-door cafés, going shopping or reclining in a grandiose hotel lobby. So then if these new places are largely envisioned for those not yet there, who has shared in the making of this vision?

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88 I ordered a package on-line and had it sent to me in NYC.
**BIDs in DC, Are They Democracy at Work?**

Place matters. It matters if we are going to grow the private sector. It matters if we are going to attract and retain residents in the city. We must have real places — vibrant and welcoming places — where businesses can take root, where the Industry Networks can thrive, and where people can live and work and raise their families with dignity and opportunity. To succeed in promoting neighborhood commercial districts, merchants need to be organized to provide cleanliness, safety, and a pleasing environment for shoppers, workers, visitors, and residents. The new Business Improvement Districts — Downtown DC, Golden Triangle, and now Georgetown — point the way to a new model of accomplishing this important task.90

The 1998 “Citizens Plan”, quoted here, advances a vision that runs through the literature on place-making. And, generally it presents a positive vignette of urban life, one that we can probably all agree upon. The question is how we arrive at this end place. Interestingly, BIDs are cited as a model through which to organize merchants in support of these aims; yet, as the examination of the BID enabling process in DC illustrates, actual BID establishment processes belie this original intention. Or, maybe the “need to organize” in this context points to the requirement for coercive inducement.

In DC BIDs are incorporated as non-profit agencies, and their approval process per legislation requires submission of a business plan, an affirmative petition from at least 25% of property owners, from owners holding at least 51% of the assessed value, and from 51% of merchants as well as formal Mayoral approval after a public hearing. In DC the formal process is a more inclusive one than in other cities, such as

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Philadelphia and New York, for example, where those property owners within the proposed district not in favor have to organize and officially register their opposition to the creation of a BID. The executive at the downtown BID echoed the sentiments found in literature favorable to BIDs, namely, that BIDs represent a return to localized control over resource allocation and by extension to grassroots democracy.

I mean to me this is democracy at a lower level because you are giving the money back. You are letting the people spend money to influence [planning and development].

In the words of another executive, “It’s about bringing the business community folks together, the building owners together to form something that works to address their issues.” Yet, the tacit understanding is that the requirement to include merchants in the process is impossible to meet. The same executive acknowledged, “it’s in the law but every time a new BID comes on where the requirement exists, they just exempt them from that requirement. What they should do is change law because it’s a requirement that can’t be met.” So while advocacy literature, business journals and practitioners market the process ideal as a participatory planning process, one about building consensus, it is an ideal undercut by the very structure of the BID institution.

This local democracy at work is imagined and understood within parameters of public choice principles where you pay for what you get; and, if you pay you are entitled.

It is indicative that even among strong proponents of BIDs and practitioners when asked about specific processes, in this case the one establishing the Adams Morgan Partnership BID, the discourse becomes contradictory. On the one hand,

91 Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
92 Interview: Downtown BID, Deputy ED of Economic Development, July 2006
when talking generally about BIDs, one Downtown BID executive, as noted, claimed that BID processes are about “bringing folks together.” On the other hand, in reference specifically to Adams Morgan, this same executive later on in the conversation conceded the following:

So I knew there was no way to organize a BID [in Adams Morgan] because two things: because one was the way the legislation was written required 51% of the tenants to agree. It took them over 6 years - even without doing the requirement - to dig up the 51% of the assessed value and 25% of owners; it took them that long, it took them what almost 10 years... 94

It follows that really the most expedient way, and really the only way, to insure the BID establishment process is to narrow the field of participants. To this date the reality reflects this trend; all BIDs in DC have received exemption from the merchant approval provision.

The next chapter turns to the specificity of the processes that led to the creation of the Adams Morgan Partnership BID. The case is interesting because the CDC spearheading, what was to be an Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant BID, wanted to buck the trend and include the voices of merchants in both neighborhoods. The proposal, however, became controversial. Fissures developed during the eight years of the active BID establishment process and as the BID got underway after its BID creation.

The next three case study chapters home in on this neighborhood level discussion. The first one examines the challenges and conflicts that arose during the organizing process. The second one discusses how different neighborhood actors, delineate, compose and experience their neighborhood space. The chapter endeavors

94 Interview: Downtown BID, Deputy ED of Economic Development, July 2006
to illustrate to what extent a BID in ethnically and class diverse neighborhoods, such as the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area, may reinforce social inequalities and historic cleavages. But first, the discussion of how the BID came about.
CHAPTER 7

THE ADAMS MORGAN PARTNERSHIP IS BORN

As illustrated by Washington, DC, the political struggles and coalitions emerging in multi-class and multicultural communities, such as Mount Pleasant, offer important insights into the social construction of the post-industrial city of the future (Manning 1998, 349).

As the previous chapter has outlined, the formation of BIDs in Washington came not without controversy. Due to concentrated property ownership in the central business district, it was fairly easy for downtown property owners to create the BID after overcoming the first and onerous hurdle, passing the enabling legislation. Since 1996, then, BIDs in DC are a reality, and neighborhood BIDs are being planned and organized everyday. On the neighborhood level, the BID establishment process is more complex and worth examining. The fragmentation and the diversity of property ownership, the predominance of residential properties as well as the presence of vocal and locally rooted merchant and residential interests create a dense and multifaceted micropolitical context.95

While scholars have cautioned against the implementation of BIDs in predominately residential areas (Justin and Goldsmith 2006, Christopherson 1994, Mallet 1994), there is a gap in the literature on BIDs in reference to the specific examination of the political and social power relations in which neighborhood BID establishment processes in particular are embedded. In this chapter I examine the BID establishment process with the view of highlighting the interests that aligned to

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95 Several informants, government officials as well as Downtown DC BID executives noted this as a factor complicating the establishment of BIDs in DC’s neighborhoods (John McGaw, Coordinator of ReStore DC in Deputy Mayor’s Office for Planning and Economic Development. April 2006; Sternlieb, Downtown BID, July 2006)
successfully create the Adams Morgan Partnership BID, which simultaneously required the exclusion of Mount Pleasant from the district.

In the first part of this chapter, I first present the policy context in which the CDC developed the idea for a neighborhood BID. The section illustrates how the neoliberalization of community development has constrained neighborhood-level organizations and community-oriented economic development professionals in accomplishing their mission of alleviating poverty and dismal housing conditions for their low-income constituents; while they are asked to build bridges to and work for disadvantaged communities, the structural parameters within which they work often frustrate their ability to implement this mission.

The second part of the chapter then turns to the detailed analysis of the establishment process, examining the conflicts of interest that arose as well as the compromises and resolutions that led to the establishment of the BID. With regard to the establishment process, interests aligned along different axes. The research brought to the surface the oppositional relationships that exist among merchants on the commercial corridors in this ethnically and diverse urban area. These relationships are conditioned by the following affiliations: immigrant vs. non-immigrant; daytime vs. nighttime; and newcomers vs. old-timers. (None of these categorizations are mutually exclusive as individual merchants may fall into several of these at once.) A general pattern emerged whereby, these oppositional categories were associated to a lesser or greater degree with accommodative and/or accumulative interests. These interests, in turn, are structured by historical patterns of investment and disinvestment by different actors in the neighborhoods and their timing.
The CDC, Political Advocacy versus Incorporation

The evolution of the CDC spearheading the BID process illustrates tensions that arise from the market-oriented, decentralized community development policies that have emerged under neoliberalism (Cummings 2002). As the national policy environment in Washington, the federal city, transitioned to the new federalism under Nixon which was consolidated under Reagan by retrenchment in public spending, the city, although it became known as a highly welfare-oriented municipal regime, also suffered economic decline and finally bankruptcy. In 1995, these cumulative processes culminated in the takeover of the city by the Financial Control Board.

The City’s local development policy consequently aligned itself with the dominant neoliberal strategy, focusing increasingly on entrepreneurship and homeownership as tools to building individual wealth. As DC experienced the pressures of economic decline and restructuring, the municipal government focused its economic development policies on supporting place-based development strategies to attract residents and businesses. CDCs, consequently were pressured adjust to shifting funding priorities in order to survive institutionally. In this light, this particular CDC’s evolution cannot be linked solely to the decisions of a single executive director or of the staff but must be seen in the context of these structural factors, influencing the resolution to professionalize the organization and change programmatic foci.

In the year 2000, furthermore, community development block grants (CDBG), which had previously been set aside for the work of CDCs, became competitive grants for which private sector and other non-profit organizations could also compete. The board and staff increasingly spent their time on efforts to remain competitive and on winning grants rather than on community organizing and community-based planning.

\footnote{Parts of this particular section were presented in Schaller (2001) and later published in Novy and Schaller (2005).}
Part of the process entailed the development of “models” and “best practices” rather than sustained, focused programmatic work.

Originally founded in 1991, the CDC was legally incorporated as a 501c3 non-profit organization. The status prohibits it from engaging overtly in political activities. The original Board of Directors constitutes the organization; and, while CDCs should ensure the representativeness of the board with regard to the communities with which they work, no exact criteria, such as residency requirements exist. Theoretically, the board is comprised of members for life and cannot be recalled through elections, for example. The Board hires the Executive Director, who often is delegated the everyday working of the organization and given authority to hire staff. The very organizational structure of a CDC then allows for an organizational mutation to occur that is not checked -- approved or prevented -- by the wider community.

The original Executive Director and staff were locally-known activists and community members. The staff, in general were experienced community organizers, who, while they may have lacked formal education, nevertheless knew the community well and some had experienced refugee status and displacement first hand. Over the years, however, the staff became increasingly professionalized, and the programmatic foci also began to expand and change.

As early as in 1992 with the acceptance of government funding, which is part of the community development block grant program (CDBG), the CDC exposed itself to having to comply with federal guidelines and policy priorities. As a result, under the Community Based Services Grants from the DC Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), for example, the housing programs had to have a strong focus on homeownership counseling under The Home Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP). The Program provides tax and down payment incentives as well as interest-free or low-interest mortgages to individuals and families interested in
purchasing a home in the District. Yet, especially, since the late 1990’s, increasingly, Housing Counseling Agencies, including this CDC, are unable to place qualified low- and moderate-income families in DC (Athey 2000, CDC Executive Directors). More importantly, the focus on these government-funded programs diverted the CDCs’ attention away from their initial concentration on tenant organizing and coop-conversion, a proven but arduous strategy to preserve affordable housing over the long term.

In the late 1990’s the DC housing market was squeezed by a vacancy rate of 0.7% far below the national rate of 6.5% (Athey 2000). Consequently, since 1998 rents increased by 10% to 30% across the city (Deane 2000). In Mount Pleasant the rate was 69%. (Deane 2000). The dire predictions in reference to affordable housing and the forced displacement of Latino, Asian and African American families from the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area are becoming reality.

In 2000, then neighborhood low-income tenants faced an acute crisis when the District government placed thirty-two rental apartment buildings on a condemnation list. Given the District’s political context and current development policies as well as the area’s economic revitalization, community activists, housing coalitions and non-profit agencies explicitly linked the government’s condemnation of these buildings to the redevelopment of the area. The buildings’ selection, most of which were located in the heart of Mount Pleasant and the adjacent neighborhood of Columbia Heights, sparked public outrage and community organizing efforts.97

The crisis serves to highlight the conflictive roles CDCs have to play. In DC tenants, in theory, possess the “Right of First Refusal,” which means that when a building is put up for sale, tenants have the right organize and to buy their building.

97 Meetings attended in 2000 variously organized and / or attended by the following: DC Government agencies, the Mayor DC, Coalition for Housing Justice, The Washington Lawyers committee, Council of Latino Agencies, and the Committee for Indigenous Solidarity.
However in order to achieve this, tenants have to organize a formal tenants association and find financial assistance. In this case, the city circumvented this specific right by condemning the buildings, declaring them uninhabitable. When faced with organized resistance, it promised vouchers and moving grants to tenants in order to vacate the buildings. However, fifty-nine percent of the tenants affected were Latino residents (in one building the residents were predominately Vietnamese immigrants), the majority of whom were ineligible for vouchers due to their insecure immigration status. None of the solutions presented by the city addressed the tenants’ desire to stay in the neighborhood.98

The organizing and political action efforts in the Mount Pleasant area was led by a coalition of organizations and community activists was spearheaded by a local immigration legal clinic. The local CDCs, including the one serving Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant, which had the expertise to supervise the conversion of apartment buildings to limited equity-cooperatives, maintained a low profile during the organizing efforts. It demonstrated the paradoxical position CDCs occupy, politically dependant on the city for their funding, CDCs walk a tight-rope in politically volatile situations. O’Connell (1996) argues that “long-term government support of an agency creates a quasi-governmental entity with decreasing value as an independent agent” (224). Unfortunately, CDCs are, consequently, often viewed as opportunistic, interested in expanding their project portfolios and budgets (Halpern 1995). In the Washington, DC case, the CDCs were caught in crossfire of criticism.

The Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant CDC, as noted, was born out of the frustration of the local Latino population, fuelled by the lack of adequate employment, affordable decent housing and bilingual social services. As a member of the Council

98 Meetings attended in 2000 variously organized and / or attended by the following: DC Government agencies, the Mayor DC, DC Coalition for Housing Justice, The Washington Lawyers committee, Council of Latino Agencies, and the Committee for Indigenous Solidarity.
of Latino Agencies, the CDC was conceived to serve the interests of the Latino community as an advocacy as well as community development agent. Yet, its political and structural position precluded it from taking an overtly political stance.

The two leaders of the organization spearheading the political efforts, on the other hand, were two Latinos closely connected to the El Salvadoran community; one, a young man in his 20’s, had experienced eviction first hand as a young boy. These two activists understood and publicly articulated the complex, political, social and economic lifespace immigrants in general and, particularly, undocumented immigrants experience in DC. The Latino immigrant communities in DC, they highlighted, depend on the bilingual legal, youth, health and human services offered by the myriad of non-profit agencies they have helped to build and support, specifically in this geographic area. A neighborhood represents not only a place of residence, they cogently argued, it embodies social commitments and support networks, cultural spaces, in short the needs, struggles, and hopes of the diverse communities that shape it.

**Entrepreneurialism, Commercial Corridor Revitalization, and the BID**

In order to maintain its competitive edge, since 1997 the CDC has shifted its focus toward commercial corridor revitalization and has worked extensively with neighborhood businesses to organize and strengthen business associations. Paradoxically these place-based development efforts contribute to the revalorization of the neighborhood and with it travel the specters of gentrification and displacement as the real estate market improves.

The example of the BID nicely highlights the three tensions within the CDC model, 1) the impact of structural imperatives to adapt to the larger economic development policy environment, 2) the difficulty in balancing advocacy for low-income constituents with the need to serve a new clientele as the neighborhood
‘improves,’ and 3) the complexity of working in neighborhoods that are composed of multiple communities segmented by class, race, homeownership and culture.

Since 1998, the CDC actively spearheaded the possible development of a neighborhood Business Improvement District that would comprise two neighborhoods in order to reach economies of scale. The establishment of a BID in Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant seemed to build naturally on the CDC’s revitalization work. It already managed a public grant for commercial façade improvements in Mount Pleasant; the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which provides community development block grant (CDBG) funding to the CDC, was interested in seeing it expand its efforts through the further incorporation of the private sector. Moreover, the Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan business associations, with which the CDC has worked, were already functioning as a voluntary BID, in that they organized supplemental street cleaning and spearheaded beautification projects as well as community festivals. The rationale for a formalized BID rested on the aim to distribute the costs of these efforts across all merchants and property owners.

The proposal for a BID sparked a controversy among the CDC staff 1) because the proposed plan did not include a community-wide decision-making process that would include residents as well as businesses in the deliberation over the approval of a BID and 2) because staff members considered that given the CDC’s mission, the organization should step up its efforts in tenant organizing and advocating for affordable housing.

The first point of controversy arose out of the decision to restrict participation to business and commercial property owners as the law prescribes. Residents were not conceived of as stakeholders on the commercial corridors. The planned BID approval process consisted of negotiations with the business associations and property owners and contemplated a subsequent petition of approval. Several staff members,
cautioning against a BID, conceived of the commercial corridors as social spaces not purely serving consumers and business activities. They also shared a concern about the possible acceleration of the gentrification process, displacing current businesses and residents. These staff members, opposing the BID as contemplated, designed a process aimed at broadening the discussion of the BID to include non-profit organizations, residents, tenant associations as well as small businesses in the process. The hope was to create an alternative model to that employed across the country to institutionalize BIDs, a process that concentrates decision-making power in property owners (Mallet 1994). The idea was to commence a process that would uncover both the strengths and weaknesses of BIDs in a public forum. However, this process was viewed as too cumbersome and potentially too conflictual. Moreover, the CDBG funding did not allow for “planning” activities; therefore, the organization also lacked the financial wherewithal to continue a more inclusive process. The BID effort, thus, failed to take hold not only because of the inability to create a consensus among Board members, staff, and business owners of diverse backgrounds and interests but also due to funding constraints. In the end, as the following discussion illustrates, even the prescribed process to petition both owners and merchants was unsuccessful.

**Neighborhood Economic Development in DC**

Revitalization strategies in DC prioritize strengthening the city’s tax base by capitalizing on the city’s “position as the nation’s capital, our historic and unique neighborhood and our cultural and urban amenities.” The plan specifically focuses on attracting new residents to the city and proposes to preserve and enhance the “social, economic, historic, and physical qualities that make [the city’s residential neighborhoods] unique and desirable places in which to live.” The draft also

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99 During staff meetings in 1999 3 out of 8 staff members actively opposed the idea of a BID.
100 Mayor’s July 2006 Draft of Comprehensive Plan, 2-2.
recognizes neighborhood commercial corridors as providing “strong centers that reinforce neighborhood identity and provide destinations and services for residents.”  

At the same time as neighborhoods, like Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant, become recast as “in need of revitalization” or as “conservation areas,” institutional aims advanced by national as well as local-level policy prescriptions (policy papers, funding requirements and requests for proposal, budget priorities.) often dovetail with and reinforce funding mechanisms that promote discourses of quality of life advanced by higher-income, often White residents. In mixed-income neighborhoods, such as Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant, with inadequate institutionalized safety nets, such as strong rent control laws to secure the tenure of low-income residents and small businesses, economic development strategies support political processes wherein unequal access to economic, political, and social capital shape the choices as well as determine the ability to invest, move or stay.

The designation of neighborhoods as in need of “revitalization” or as “conservation” areas, then, carries implications as to how public and private investment patterns evolve. The official designation of the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area, for example, has changed from being identified as revitalization areas since the early 1990’s to being recently designated as the mid-city planning conservation area. “Conservation,” however, is a concept employed by the real estate industry to designate neighborhoods that are not historic districts but are considered to have significant architectural patrimony, are stable and hold a particular cachet; to lenders, developers and savvy investors then this terminology signals levels of risk.

Similarly, while most visitors to DC, still do not venture off the mall or out of the downtown central business and conventioneer areas, the aim of the economic development initiative and the redesignation of areas is to create a space, for exploration, that will entice visitors off the familiar terrain, the mall, its monuments and downtown shopping to venture into the neighborhoods. If contiguous BID areas, whose mainstay services include clean-up crews and safety patrols, covered the area from downtown, through the central city neighborhoods into themed-city neighborhoods, a visitor or a potential resident scoping out the area, could find on every street corner a greeter, to guide the experience.

**Contextualizing Micropolitics**

The Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area is a space where people of different class, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds live together. At the same time, the neighborhoods remain distinct. Residents and businesses share, contest, and re-negotiate the construction of two very neighborhood identities as well as access to resources and urban places such as parks, plazas, and streets. Political, economic and social power is unevenly distributed, resulting in the continual contestation over the space of the neighborhoods. The original neighborhood BID proposal was to include the three main commercial corridors spanning the combined area of Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant. However, the neighborhoods are variably conflated or treated as distinct by local organizations, city government agencies and funders.

The Adams Morgan neighborhood has two main commercial corridors with 330 businesses: Columbia Road is perceived as a mixture of Latino stores and chains catering to the local market, and the 18th Street corridor is seen as the heart of the neighborhood's famous or infamous nightlife. Mount Pleasant Street is a five-block long shopping corridor of low-lying brick buildings. There are about 60 businesses on the street, mostly catering to local needs. The politics in relation to the corridor in
Mount Pleasant highlight tensions among new -- mostly White – residents, and merchants seen as catering to an immigrant market, and the primarily Latino residents living on Mount Pleasant Street. The conflicts, however, are non reducible to these simplistic oppositions. In Adams Morgan complex cleavages are apparent delineating differences between newcomers and old-timers, Latino and non-Latino merchants, residents and night-time merchants, as well as day-time versus night-time merchants.

Demographic diversity and diversity within the business community in the neighborhoods does not mean that political power is proportionally distributed, for access to economic as well as social and political resources is structured unequally. Access to land-based assets, particularly, as previously noted, is unequally distributed. So is income. Homeownership rates in the neighborhoods vary by race and ethnicity with Latinos/as and African Americans exhibiting much lower ownership rates and median incomes than Whites (Census 2000).

Williams (1988), as does Davis (1991), distinguishes between the interests of property owners, able to acquire properties when neighborhoods are in decline and a new generation of property owners buying into neighborhoods where gentrification has accelerated and property values are increasing, often exponentially. In DC this division also represents and reinforces racial divisions because new homeowners in such areas tend to be White Americans who may hold divergent notions of neighborhood life and exhibit different consumer preferences (Williams 1988, Gale

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102 It was widely recognized, during the time of the research, that the White civic group, spearheading efforts to ‘improve’ the commercial corridor and neighborhood life through rather confrontational tactics, was a small group people. Yet, they were also politically connected; therefore, their efforts bore fruit in terms of visible effects on the corridor and the ways in which they impacted merchants. A discussion on the Mount Pleasant Forum, during the summer of 2000, demonstrates the indiscriminate protesting of the renewal of merchants’ liquor licenses as well as the coercive tactics to force merchants into Voluntary Agreements that held them accountable for the behavior of patrons leaving their premises.
Property ownership in conjunction with income and legal residency status in these neighborhoods then structures residential interest group alignments as well as political participation and affects the stability of tenure for residents. The 2000 housing crisis, for example, affected primarily, Vietnamese and Latino, low-income families. These families lived in buildings that had been neglected for years and were now targets for rehabilitation. However, the majority of these tenants had low-incomes and would have been unable to find comparable housing in the area. Furthermore, due to their immigration status, the majority was not eligible for section 8 vouchers; thus, their housing condition remained extremely precarious for weeks until the city and landlords together fashioned solution, allowing tenants of some buildings to buy and rehabilitate their buildings as limited-equity-coops.

Merchants align along similarly structured interests, their interests as emerged from the interviews tended to be conditioned also by their timing of investment, tenure status and the market segments they serve as well as their ability to communicate in English.\textsuperscript{103} Demographic changes consequently have and continue to structure the character of the commercial corridors (Williams 1988, Henig 1982).

One of the business leaders, who took over the leadership of the BID process, for example, describes his business strategy as creating a “Third Space” in DC. He has created such a space on the 18\textsuperscript{th} Street commercial corridor, a place where artistic people and young professionals can set up their virtual offices while simultaneously finding a daytime coffee community and a night time singles scene. A Latino merchant on Mount Pleasant street corridor serves a similar function but for a different segment of the market. A grocer, he employs locals Spanish-speaking residents. The

\textsuperscript{103} In the neighborhoods that had been majority African American in 1970, for example, the demographic change in those neighborhoods has had significant impact on local politics, especially on the composition of the ANC (Modan 2007, Low and .)
merchant in 2000 also sold empanadas bought from a woman who makes them in her home kitchen. The fence outside the store is used as a hang-out place for young men in the neighborhood. Both merchants through their presence and actions support the formation of social and economic networks but for neighborhood communities whose direct life experiences seldom intertwine, except for in the neighborhood spaces outside their residences.

Neighborhood BIDs as the above discussion and descriptions indicate are grafted onto complex social and economic situations. Examining the micropolitics of neighborhood revitalization, generally, and the process of establishing a neighborhood BID, in particular, aims at surfacing the conflicts and power struggles that are obscured by the dominant refrain in reference to BIDs, namely that they constitute a form of grassroots, democratic form of local governances that is uncomplicated by politics.

Initial Phase of the BID Establishment Process, Courting Merchants

The legal structure of BIDs in DC implies that they have the potential to create an extended jurisdictional district in which property owners gain disproportionate decision-making power. The neighborhood BID plan for the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area emerged through the collaboration between the local business associations and a local CDC promoting the BID model as a means of neighborhood ‘revitalization.’ The idea emerged as early as 1996 when a current BID executive, I interviewed, was working on the enabling legislation in his capacity as Staff Director of the Economic Development committee for the District Council. He was asked on several occasions to talk constituents of then Ward 1 Councilmember Frank Smith to advance the idea of neighborhood level BIDs. The executive explains:

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104 DC is subdivided into 8 Wards, represented by Councilmembers on the City Council.
I was going because I needed a vote, I was moving the legislation so Frank was interested in it, and he was always pushing it. He was trying to get everybody together, and he and one or two people who were interested. But the person, who was the Business Association President [in Adams Morgan], forever and [a bar owner] and others had no interest in it. They did not want to pay more taxes. They liked what they got…it was wacky to them so they were contrarians… The problem is that the BID has to come from the local leadership; it can’t come from a council member. The council member isn’t the right vehicle. If the politicians propose a BID, it obviates why you are doing it in the first place. It’s about bringing the business community folks together, the building owners together, to form something that works to address their issues.  

As this commentary indicates the BID idea did not originate from within the neighborhood but was initially conceived as a political project. Furthermore, sectors of the “community,” including local property owners and merchants, were opposed to the idea from the outset. Yet, despite the early indication of opposition to the BID concept, the CDC leadership, following directives incorporated in the CDBG funding programs, continued to develop the idea of the BID. In 1998, the CDC proposed and received funding to establish a model neighborhood BID in the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area, one rooted in the needs and growing out of the participation of merchants as well as property owners. Merchants, however, in the initial proposal were conceptualized as the primary stakeholders.

In 1997, the CDC had conducted a simple survey of 300 (approximately 70%) of the businesses in both neighborhoods. The CDC wanted to identify the businesses on the corridors and to assess the issues business owners identified as impacting their

105 Interview: Deputy Executive Director of the Downtown DC BBID, July 2006.
ability to do business and to attract a greater clientele. Businesses highlighted the following three issues as their main concerns: 1) parking, 2) crime, and 3) cleanliness.

In order to build leadership capacity among the merchants on the commercial corridors, the CDC, subsequently, focused on lending technical assistance to the two business associations, the Adams Morgan Business and Professional Association (AMBPA) and the Mount Pleasant Business Association (MPBA). The idea was to reinvigorate the business associations, to broaden their membership base and at the same time to be able to offer services that addressed the specific issues they had raised.

At the time, the business association in Adams Morgan, which had been approached by the Councilmember’s office, was viewed as being led by a few “old-timers” who were not easily budged in their opinions. In 1998 new AMBPA elections were held, and the leadership of the business association passed into the hands of a relatively new merchant on the corridor, willing to take the BID idea under consideration. The shift in leadership foreshadowed the ensuing struggle between old-timers and newcomers on the corridor.

With community development block grant (CDBG) funding and a dedicated staff person from the CDC, the business associations in 1998 began to function much as a voluntary BID in that in both neighborhoods the commercial corridors received supplemental street cleaning and benefited from ‘beautification’ projects such as flower planting, banners and new trash receptacles. Additionally, the CDC received funding for façade improvements to be carried out in Mount Pleasant. The business associations also began to participate more extensively in the planning of community festivals.

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106 See Henig (1982) for a discussion of this recurring dynamic, indicating a recurring struggle over the organizations control.
The CDC’s proposal to formalize an area BID rested on the argument that it would take these current activities a step further by institutionalizing the efforts with a secured funding stream no longer reliant on grant funding. Furthermore, the creation of a BID would distribute the financial and time burden of these voluntary efforts more evenly across all businesses. During this early phase, however, the CDC continued to provide staffing oversight and administrative support for an annual $12,000 business association grant (CDBG funding). As a result, the business associations’ leadership although in theory supportive, did not prioritize the establishment of a BID at that time.107

**Geographic Constriction of the Proposed BID Area**

In 2001, CDC changed leadership and lost key staff members. This severed the organization’s institutional memory regarding the BID project. Although the CDC continued the BID project for some time longer, the new leadership also seems to have been more sensitive to the controversies that were arising. The nature of the cleavages threatened to disrupt the organization’s link to its mission and relationship to its primary constituents, Latinos in the target area. The CDC saw itself increasingly caught in a betwixt position, beholden to the merchants and property owners who had lent verbal support to the BID concept and Latino and other immigrant merchants, who wanted to hold the CDC accountable to their interests.108

A consultant hired by the CDC was given the task to assemble stakeholders around the concept. Paradoxically, the recommendations of the consultant centered on taking steps to build consensus within the business community and among other constituents as the neighborhood was too “fractious.”109 Subsequently, in the

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107 Interviews: CDC staff in charge of the BID project at the time and first Executive Director of the Adams Morgan Partnership, April 2006. Pro Bono Consultant to the AMBPA, April 2006.
109 Interview: Former CDC staff and BID Project Manager at the time, April 2006.
recolletion of the staff-person, who ran the BID project at the time, the CDC held four to five meetings with merchants (attended by 4-15 merchants) at the organization’s offices on 18th Street. The aim was to bring about a consensus among merchants as to the programmatic areas the BID would manage. During these meetings, it became evident that merchants were interested, first and foremost, in understanding the assessment process.

The CDC prepared the mandatory plan, including the assessment formula, that is a requirement, not only for the submission of an application to the city but also necessary as an organizing tool during the petition process. The preparation of this plan revealed the difficulty of creating a feasible assessment for low-density commercial districts, such as mixed-use neighborhood commercial corridors. Assessment formulas for BIDs can either be based on square footage or on assessed value. Commercial spaces on the commercial corridors in Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant are irregular; therefore, it is difficult to arrive at a workable formula based on square footage. The area’s relatively low commercial density, moreover, makes this an unfeasible assessment option as it would require very high assessments (in comparison to downtowns) to raise budgets sufficient to fund the operation of a BID. The other option is based on assessed value. In Adams Morgan the assessment, finally, was calculated at twenty-one cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value, at the time the highest assessment levied on neighborhood commercial properties in DC.\(^\text{110}\)

When the CDC presented the merchants with these hard numbers and merchants came to understand that the legislation allowed property owners to pass the assessment through to their tenants, -- in the words of the staff person -- “the BID

\(^{110}\) Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
fizzled” As sectors of the merchants withdrew their support of the BID, the CDC also began to question its involvement in the project. The president of the MPBA and board member of the CDC, for example, had voiced skepticism early on in the process, citing fear of displacement, and Mount Pleasant withdrew from BID project at this point in the process.  

Three main factors were cited as contributing to the Mount Pleasant neighborhood’s rejection of the BID: 1) the merchants in Mount Pleasant, serving the local market -- primarily the low-income, immigrant segment --, many of whom were immigrants and / or identified as such, collectively opposed the BID; 2) the merchants’ disinclination was reiterated and accepted by DC’s Main Street program staff who had conducted a study in the neighborhood; and 3) general consensus among the main civic organizations that Mount Pleasant should conserve and develop its own identity. Mount Pleasant Main Street, in a 2005 report funded by reStore DC, concluded “we do not recommend a BID at this time due to the tenuous nature of some of the businesses.”

Finally, the increasing negative assessment of the BID concept by Latino merchants and vendors, who were organizing themselves into a separate business association, contributed to the decision by the CDC to lay aside the BID project. The funding for the CDC staff person, managing the “voluntary BID,” ran out almost concurrently. Consequently, the resources that had funded cleaning, beautification and other commercial corridor enhancement services evaporated.

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111 Interview: Former CDC staff and BID Project Manager at the time, April 2006
112 Personal conversation: CDC Board Member and MPBA President at the time, 2000.
113 Interview: Chief of Staff for Ward 1 Council member at the time, May 2006.
115 Personal conversations: CDC Community Builder, 2000.
Perceptions of New-comers versus Old-timers

The leadership that took over the subsequent organizing effort has been characterized as “relatively new merchants on 18th street.” This leadership, nevertheless, emerged from the newly configured AMBPA. An executive of the Downtown BID notes,

my observations is that the BID in Adams Morgan was going nowhere until whoever the guy that owns Tryst is [Constantine]…Constantine then became the leader and said ‘I think this is a good idea.’

The AMBPA took over the planning for the BID; but it is perceived to have neglected to engage all merchants in Adams Morgan fully in the process. The East of Columbia Road –that is east of 18th Street, which is perceived as having a dual identity as the fast food corridor on the north side of the street and as the “Latino” one on the south side. During the process under consideration, this part of Columbia Road had become identified with the oppositional faction of merchants.

For strategic considerations, the leadership of the AMBPA considered redrawing the boundaries of the BID to exclude this group of merchants (i.e. the “Latino” businesses on Columbia Road, east of 18th Street). However, a commercial property (occupied by Safeway), which was key due to the size of the assessment it represented, would have been cut out of the BID. Because by law a district has to be contiguous, it was not feasible to carve out some of the defiant merchants while maintaining this property within the boundaries. As a result, the solution, due to the impossibility of forming consensus among 51% of the tenants as required by law, was to seek an exemption from the requirement to petition merchants, following the lead of the other BIDs in the District of Columbia. With this, the experiment for which the

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116 Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
117 Interview: former CDC staff member, April 2006.
CDC had sought support, namely, to include merchants as stakeholders and decision-makers in the BID establishment process, became undermined.

Several informants expressed the belief that the interests of merchants, specifically, the small, immigrant-owned stores in the neighborhood, selling products such as “quinzañera dresses, baptism paraphernalia, or soccer shirts,” were not sufficiently addressed during the process.\(^{118}\) There is a sense that this category of merchants, “the independent immigrant stores,” was not “legitimately courted by the original campaign for the BID.”\(^{119}\) This sentiment was reiterated by a city official involved in the process. Like the ANC commissioner, this informant commented that some of the merchants felt the process was not “legitimate.”\(^{120}\)

The divide was further delineated as an old-timer versus newcomer dynamic. I think a lot of the actual business owners don’t really have a say. It becomes the newcomer business owners, the landlords and then a third entity of people who I view as having this power play.

The city official also noted that successive patterns of investment and disinvestment in the area shaped entrepreneurial patterns. New business owners, not marked as immigrants (although some of them may very well be), in Adams Morgan tend to be perceived as focusing their entrepreneurial activities on capturing an emerging, young, outside market, while merchants who opened their stores on eastern section of Columbia Road during the period of decline see themselves in an increasingly precarious situation, trying to serve a diminishing local, often low-income market.\(^{121}\) While the Latino and other “mom and pop” merchants on East Columbia Road are often marginalized from business association and other public meetings, due

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\(^{118}\) Interview: Adams Morgan ANC Commissioner, July 2006. And, Interview: Chief of Staff for Ward 1 Councilmember at the time, May 2006.

\(^{119}\) Interview: Adams Morgan ANC Commissioner, July 2006.

\(^{120}\) Interview: Chief of Staff for Ward 1 Councilmember at the time, May 2006.

\(^{121}\) Interview: Chief of Staff for Ward 1 Councilmember at the time, May 2006.
to language barriers, the new comers who have primarily located on 18th Street and secondarily on West Columbia Road tend to be fluent English-speakers and are seen to dominate the local business organizations.

On 18th Street, the aforementioned immigrant non-immigrant categories tended to lose meaning and the conflicts were described as old-timer versus newcomer owners and daytime versus nighttime establishments. One group of merchants that was identified as opposing not the BID per se but its focus has been in the neighborhood for at least ten years, some for much longer. They invested and generally live or have lived in the area because they liked the diversity and progressive atmosphere. Their interest in the neighborhood remained more accommodative than accumulative even though some of them also own their commercial premises. These merchants while they did not oppose the BID, did voice concerns that the BID was focusing its energies too heavily on security, which they argued should be a municipal function. Instead, they would like to see a coordinated effort to market the neighborhood’s businesses holistically – that is they would like the BID to move away from an image of night-life and clubs targeted at attracting “young outsiders.” Their interests, nevertheless, have not yet been articulated into a collective expression of discontent as did the organizing among Latino merchants.

**Institutional Support, the Final Stretch**

The AMBPA received crucial pro bono professional support from a retired businessman and resident of Adams Morgan, who helped write a grant proposal, researched and wrote the business plan as well as By Laws to help create a governing structure within the prescribed legislative limitations. Additionally, DC government agencies lent their support: 1) the Chief of Staff from the City Council Member’s office gave his time and expertise to help draft the legislation and to review the by laws; 2) the Deputy Mayor’s Office for Economic Development and Planning through
its ReStore DC program lent technical assistance on the preparation of the grant proposal and designated grant dollars; 3) the Office of Tax and Revenue furnished a list of properties and assessments to develop the tax base for the BID and to make corrections to inaccurate property use records.

In its bid to assemble resources for the establishment of the BID, the Adams Morgan Business and Professional Association submitted the $18,000 grant proposal to the Deputy Mayor’s Office of Economic Development and Planning in 2002. The grant solicited funding to help the business association assess the support for a BID among neighborhood stakeholders, including residents, business and business customers. The final grant agreement gave the business association the resources to market the project (primarily through the construction of a website, the development of two brochures, and mailings), to form the legal entity that would govern the BID and to conduct the petitioning process (CD-TAP Grant Application September 9, 2002 and Personal Interview, pro bono business man June 19, 2006).

The Adams Morgan Partnership, the non-profit organization that was to become the BID governance structure, was formed in 2004; the partnership was comprised of officials of the business association. These officials also ran the initial petitioning initiative. In early 2004, however, the petitioning process, which consisted of door to door visits as well as presentations at business association meetings, failed to progress. In order to be able to submit the application that would begin the legislative process to legally register the partnership as a BID under DC law, the partnership still had to gather support petitions from at least 25% of the property owners of commercial (non-exempt) properties located in the proposed district. In addition, property owners representing 51% of the assessed value of the commercial properties in the district had to agree by signing a petition in support of the BID. By early 2004, the Partnership had only managed to gather 11% of the necessary 25% and
15% of the necessary 51%. Complicating the process was the fragmented ownership pattern in Adams Morgan and the high proportion of absentee landlords.

In the fall of 2004, the former staff person from the CDC, who had served as commissioner on the Advisory Neighborhood Commission and was still involved in local politics and interested in the neighborhood’s development, approached the president of the business association with a proposal. In return for the commitment of one month’s salary, he offered to raise the necessary funds to get the BID passed.\textsuperscript{122} With an unsolicited grant to cover the his salary from the Deputy Mayor’s Office for Economic Development and Planning, the partnership now had the necessary resources to dedicate a full-time person to the establishment of the BID, and the petitioning process moved forward.

\textit{Negotiating Access to Power}

A final power struggle emerged within the AMBPA with the election of a new Board of Directors. Behind the scenes, one property owner, who was holding out the last 2% needed to reach the threshold so the partnership could submit the application and petitions to the city for review, was lobbying to have certain people placed on the Board. The compromise resulted in a shared chairmanship on the Board of Directors of the Adams Morgan Partnership.\textsuperscript{123}

In June 2005, the partnership submitted the application. Because of difficulties in gaining consensus and increasing worries about factions who were “trying to get the ear of Graham (DC council member for the area),” the BID legislation was introduced

\textsuperscript{122} One Commissioner shared the following sentiment about the political process that had occurred: “There was a very odd conflict though that happened, which was the rumors of who would be the Executive Director of the BID were sort of flying and ---- was on the ANC at that time. And ----is very, very, very pro business, and so when things would come up and there would be conflicts between a business and residents, --- had a reputation of being sort of pro business. And I think, people openly started to speculate. Oh well that is his position because he wants the BID directorship. But I think that most of the ANC, most of the commissioners felt like, well we don’t have a dog in this fight.”

\textsuperscript{123} Interview: Pete Feathers, Pro Bono Consultant to the Adams Morgan Partnership, April 2006; Interview Adams Morgan ANC Commissioner, July 2006.
on an emergency basis, and the amendment legally registering the BID was passed in August 2005. Within 120 days a new Board had to be elected by all Business and Property owners. Election notices were sent in December and elections held in January. But in the post discussions of the BID the sense that the BID was implemented as a project conceived and wanted by only a few lingers. There is also a sense that the neighborhood is on an inexorable path of change that small stores, who continue to rely on the immigrant and local market, may not survive.

I see a lot of the business, who really headed up the BID, as being relative newcomers. And, that’s a tough one if you have a relative newcomer have this idea, which by itself is not controversial and should be beneficial to all businesses, but I think that for a lot of longer term businesses….for Valdemar Travel, you know somebody who has been at that corner 18th and Columbia and who was synonymous with Adams Morgan to have somebody come in and say “well we need to do this and this to run our businesses correctly.” I think they felt was an awful bit of sort of White intrusion telling us how we should manage our neighborhood and do our thing. And, slowly, one by one, businesses that have been here 30 or 40 years have all been picked off. And when they leave it’s not a new entrepreneur that takes their place. It’s a chain that takes their place or an expansion of an existing business that takes their place.

**Competition, Exclusion, and Compromise**

As noted, (Henig 1982) Adams Morgan is famous for its organizational density; it is also infamous for the vociferous community arguments that have at times consumed neighborhood life. The BID process emerged as one of those issues that surfaced the fragmented political landscape. In the concluding phases of the BID establishment process confrontations were seen as power struggles among leaders
within different sub-communities, businesses and organizations serving them. The interests that aligned were, however, not simply conditioned by their tenure status in the neighborhood, namely tenants versus owners, but by a combination of structural and ideological factors. As such, neighborhood merchants, largely but not exclusively immigrant merchants who had invested in the neighborhood during its era of ‘decline,’ feel increasingly threatened by the changes on the commercial corridor and as their customer-base shrinks. Newer, entrepreneurially focused, merchants, who on the other hand, have and are investing in the neighborhood in order to capture the increasingly affluent local market as well as visitors whom they hope to attract by marketing Adams Morgan ‘funky’ identity, are interested in marketing this atmosphere to increase consumer sales.

Among commercial property owners an interesting dynamic emerged as well. Property ownership is highly fragmented, and about 190 owners had to be petitioned. The high number of absentee landlords posed one obstacle; another controversy as previously noted, centered around access to decision-making power on the BIDs board. Thirdly, some owners who invested in the 1970’s, specifically because they appreciated the progressive political atmosphere and demographic diversity, apparently expressed concerns about their ability to maintain their lease rates low enough for the smaller merchants.124

The BID, approved in 2005, covers the two commercial corridors in official Adams Morgan, and today works in tandem with the citywide revitalization initiative to promote Adams Morgan as a diverse and exciting destination location (See Map 6).

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124 Interview: Chief of Staff for Ward 1 Councilmember at the time, May 2006.
Map 6: Adams Morgan Partnership BID boundaries.
Interestingly the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, the only elected local governance body, removed itself from the debate. One of the commissioner commented:

I think we’d like to see many of the ultimate goals of the BID but as people started to divide and there ended up being these huge fights over if we were to have the BID and what the BID would look like, I think the ANC was like, we are not taking a position on that, we are not being taxed for it, we are not the ones who are having to write a check every month or every quarter to the BID. Yet, residents, as the next chapter elucidates, are inextricably linked to life on the commercial corridor. Their perceptions and experiences of the neighborhood’s commercial corridor spaces condition their daily routines and habits. So, while this chapter has focused on identifying the specific interests that emerged among the merchants and commercial property owners that were by definition stakeholders in the process, the next chapter focuses on how the neighborhoods and their commercial spaces are perceived and experienced by different sectors of the population. The chapter, furthermore, examines how the commercial corridor shapes and is shaped by the daily practices of residents and visitors and relates these to the representations of neighborhood space marketed by the BID.
CHAPTER 8
DISCOURSES OF PLACE: MEANINGS AND CONSTITUTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD SPACES

Ultimately, many middle-class people who want to reclaim a piece of the vibrant central city for themselves are going to have to change. They have to take on the job of the work of culture. They need to learn from the cultural world of those who preceded them…Residents need to build a world of routine interactions. Residents should be made to feel safe, but many newer residents are trapped in a web of perception. [Yet,] the more they frequent Main Street the safer they might feel. (Williams 1988)

This chapter spatializes theories of public choice and of class and ethnic relations in economic development projects within the situated interaction of specific neighborhood and policy constituents in Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant. The aim is to probe the abstract neighborhood space marketed by the Adams Morgan Partnership by placing it in juxtaposition to perceptions of neighborhood space as expressed by various neighborhood constituents, including groups generally marginalized from public decision-making processes regarding economic development. Comparing local perceptions of neighborhood space to conceptions promoted in formal revitalization project proposals is helps to gain an understanding of whose perspectives on neighborhood life become privileged and institutionalized.

BIDs, by carving out a fixed jurisdictional district, set neighborhood boundaries. In this manner they demarcate and create a set of local constituents. At the same time, the work of BIDs is to the increase local economic activity; therefore, the work of traditional BIDs is not merely to create a “clean and safe” environment but also to create a marketable image in order to attract people willing to invest and spend
their money in the district.\textsuperscript{125} Little of the research on BIDs has focused on the micropolitics of neighborhood BIDs, and few researchers have examined the specific notions of citizenship and public space that actual community members hold and how different understandings of these concepts interact to shape ideologies of place and neighborhood identities (Modan 2007). Therefore, little ethnographic insight exists into the specific kinds of conceptions of space that BIDs, may exclude, and whose visions of the neighborhood get picked up and privileged in discourses promoting BIDs, and whose get obscured.

The BID model is built partially on the notions of free choice and mobility. However, in practice, choice is not wielded in a vacuum. Choice is often constrained and mobility coerced through displacement as a result of changing real estate markets, including the creation of speculative markets. Choices are also actively shaped through the deployment of resources toward place marketing, backed up by strategies to translate image into material form (Mitchell 2003). Consequently, it is critical to take into account the impact of a neighborhood BID model on the political, discursive, social and physical displacement of community members, particularly in mixed-income neighborhoods, characterized also by mixed-use commercial corridors; the formation of a neighborhood BID jurisdiction may circumscribe on multiple levels the definition of who constitutes the local community and effect the displacement of economically weaker businesses as well as residents.

In the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant BID proposal, nonetheless, despite the numerous mixed-use commercial/residential buildings and large apartment buildings along the proposed neighborhood BID’s commercial corridors, residents were never seriously considered as stakeholders, and the planning and establishment

\textsuperscript{125} Sternlieb, Deputy Executive Director, Economic Development at the Downtown DC BID and staff Director of the Economic Development Committee, City Council in 1996. July 2006.
process did not include any opportunities for meaningful public comment. Moreover, as the previous chapter showed, the majority of merchants were also excluded from the process, even though it evolved into a merchant-led project. The specific interests that aligned to produce the Adams Morgan Partnership by necessity narrowed the field of recognized district stakeholders in order to create a BID that (at the time of writing in 2007) would at least cover 18th Street and Columbia Road even if it excluded Mount Pleasant Street.

Additionally, neighborhood BID promotional materials from 1999 reveal that the activities of the neighborhood BID were internally pre-defined by the CDC spearheading it. These materials already proposed supplemental street-cleaning, security, streetscape improvement and marketing, as well as cultural events. Notably, over 50% of the proposed budget in the original budget was apportioned to security and maintenance (Gibson 1999); this proportion changed little, holding at 57% in the 2004 business plan submitted to the DC government.126

The Neighborhood BID, therefore, came to be conceived by its designers and supporters as encompassing primarily the commercial corridors and as an economic space that had to compete with other commercial areas to attract businesses and customers by marketing an attractive environment. The BID’s self-set task is to ensure an Adams Morgan district that is “Clean, Safe, and Organized” (BID Business Plan 2005). Superficial conceptions of neighborhood commercial corridors that neglect to examine the work of the street, namely, the confluence of activities that occur on the corridor that create and reinforce social networks, however, may come to define success by merely counting the number of nationally-recognized retailers on the corridor.

126 Notably 38% of the budget goes to administration.
The previous chapter outlined what interest groups aligned to form the BID; this chapter brings to the foreground the conflicting views different constituent groups in the Adams Morgan / Mount Pleasant area hold about neighborhood identity, economic development and the use of neighborhood space and citizenship. I focus on the following three themes: 1) defining borders, composing neighborhoods, 2) conflicting perceptions of neighborhood, 3) marketing diversity, commodifying the neighborhood landscape, and 4) insiders-outsiders, creating spaces of avoidance.

**Defining Borders, Composing Neighborhoods**

Neighborhood boundaries, onto which neighborhood BIDs may be grafted, at the same time as they are officially sanctioned, are also socially constructed and often embedded in historical conflicts. The 1920’s move of Mount Pleasant’s eastern boundary from 14th to 16th street, for example, became a fixed jurisdictional boundary that segregated African Americans from White-Americans (cf. Gale 1987, Modan 2000). Constructions of the neighborhood’s eastern border as an ethnic border, and consequent tensions over this border, thus, have a long history, and are often reiterated in contemporary discourses regarding defensive strategies to preserve property values. I examine the work of boundaries\(^\text{127}\) in both neighborhoods in order to get at the ways intra-community as well as inter-community boundaries are drawn to constitute neighborhood identities. What salience does the marking of boundaries have for planners? Bourdieu writes “that objective relations of power tend to reproduce themselves in symbolic relations of power in visions of a social world which contribute to ensuring the permanence of those relations of power” (1999, 238). Where boundaries take a sense of permanence, whether imaginative, physical,

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\(^{127}\) Lan (2003) employs the formulation boundary work to examine the was in which domestic workers and those employing domestic workers enacted boundaries to negotiate and circumscribe their relationships. In this manner she examined actually physical boundaries drawn as well as socially and emotionally constructed ones.
economic or social, they influence and shape not only urban neighborhoods but also pattern investment and the development of cities, thereby circumscribing the lives of individuals and groups who inhabit, lay claim or abandon them.

**Reifying Official Borders**

While the first task during the mapping workshops asked participants to draw their neighborhood; neighborhood names were deliberately not mentioned in order to avoid pre-defining them. A look at how mapping participants delineated their neighborhoods gives an insight into construction of place by different communities. From the ways participants expressed the boundaries of their self-identified “neighborhoods,” distinct conceptions of and strategies to produce “neighborhood” emerged.

Current, official neighborhood boundaries\(^{128}\) (See Map 7 and 8) are the ones generally reaffirmed in the maps and discussions of local civic groups\(^{129}\) (See Maps 9 and 10). This is not surprising, given that their official responsibilities are circumscribed by these boundaries. Participants, generally of the professional class, also reinforced this formulation, whether or not they were actively involved with local organizations\(^{130}\).

Interestingly is the way in which these mapping group participants carved out “neighborhood turf.” While natural boundaries, such as Rock Creek Park, and topographic variation, such as the Harvard Street ‘ravine’ between Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant, are depicted as uncontested, static, “natural” boundaries, others are portrayed as vulnerable borders separating people.

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128 They were also used as markers for the BID proposal.
129 I place the ANC commissioners groups for both neighborhoods and the community development professionals group in Adams Morgan in the civic group category (this was a resident group where all participants were engaged in community development work in the area).
130 Interestingly, participants in the Adams Morgan resident mapping workshop were all somehow involved in community development issues, whether in Adams Morgan, citywide or nationally.

Map 9: ANC Workshop Map, Mount Pleasant, 2000

Map 10: ANC Workshop Map, Adams Morgan, 2006
Notable is the prominent demarcation of 16th Street as an impenetrable boundary among civic group participants from both the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods. These mapmakers drew 16th St. as the neighborhoods’ eastern border, separating Columbia Heights from the Adams Morgan area. 16th St. emerges in civic group participants’ drawings and descriptions as an almost impermeable geographical boundary, which contributes to isolating both Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant from the majority African American neighborhood east of 16th Street. While 16th Street, itself, was recognized as holding an important historical legacy in terms of the cultural institutions and architectural gems that can be viewed along the corridor, it was also clearly portrayed on Maps 9 and 11, for example, as a “freeway” and major physical border.
In their talk civic group participants, who were with one exception White-Americans, saw 16th St. as separating relative crime from relative safety. These perceptions of safety and danger in DC with regard to 16th Street are fraught with racial connotations, however, as 16th street still today demarcates the demographic separation of African Americans from White-Americans. The demarcation and emerged most strongly among Mount Pleasant civic group participants. One Mount Pleasant participant remarked, “16th St. is a demarcation line. What goes on over there is usually kept over there. There are different kinds of activities. More recently the criminal element has been brought down because of the metro station.” Another participant added, “before the metro came in, I didn’t have occasion to go over there [the other side of 16th Street] very much, now I’m going over there every day. It feels safer, looks safer. [But] it’s a little peninsula, ‘cause [the metro’s] the only place to go, you or me have no other reason to go there.”

In this case, the strategic investment by the city has had a marked impact on the daily routine of people living in the area, which is beginning to break down perceptual boundaries. The development of the metro station at 14th Street, for example, is also leveraging the mixed-use, redevelopment of parcels on in Columbia Heights. As a consequence, Columbia Heights has in recent years experienced a rapid increase in property values, 63% between 2004 and 2005. Due to its architectural heritage, moreover, the area is also recognized as a conservation area, and gentrification is visibly moving eastward across 16th Street, as evidenced in the renovation of row houses. Furthermore, the projected opening of Target and Bed, Bath and Beyond and the construction of luxury condominiums indicates that the

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Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area will be become increasingly linked to and affected by commercial development on 14th street.

Boundaries are historically sites of contestation. As gentrification proceeds in Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant as well as Columbia Heights, neighborhood boundaries become contested and renegotiated. What emerged from these map makers was also the sense that their neighborhood was under siege. Because of its location, Adams Morgan, for example, has what might be considered several potentially vulnerable boundaries; that is, the neighborhood abuts several other residential and commercial areas with strong identities. The southern boundary of what many old-timers recognized as Adams Morgan, for example, changed with the progressing gentrification northward; subsequently, parts of what was once “Adams Morgan” in the early 1990’s became, in the perception of many, part of “Dupont Circle.” In a reference to the current gentrification of Adams Morgan, one mapmaker (See Map 11) drew a Stop sign at the southern border while another from a different workshop remarked that Adams Morgan should have a sign at California Street stating, “Welcome to Adams Morgan, but for God’s sake don’t move here.”

This sentiment was reiterated in discussions of changes in the neighborhood wherein the loss of residential and commercial diversity became a recurring theme. These participants demarcated Adams Morgan as a separate neighborhood, and more or less agreed as to its basic boundaries, following the current official jurisdictional contours, while expressing the need to defend this circumscribed neighborhood geography.

But even the Adams Morgan identity is being renegotiated as a movement to form historic districts within its current boundaries, has drawn on the identities of the sub-neighborhoods that existed before Adams Morgan came into being in the 1950’s. This subdivision, however, focuses on pre-1950’s history, thereby negating the
progressive identity construction that unified sub-communities around a view of
neighborhood life rooted in the notion of solidarity.

The insular sense of identity that emerged from the civic organization maps as
well as from map-makers from the professional class, stands in contrast to the one
expressed by a long time merchant who has been in Adams Morgan since the 1970’s
and has raised her children above the family restaurant. “The neighborhood is large.
We can belong with Mount Pleasant. It’s a large community Adams Morgan.”

Furthermore, while the maps discussed above illustrated separate sense of
identities attached to the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods, Latino
and Vietnamese residents and long-time merchants, generally, did not strongly
delineate these neighborhoods into separate social or commercial spaces. This
expansive view of neighborhood space are rooted in structures of feeling (Williams
1985), produced through everyday encounters in and with urban space.

**Composing the Unofficial Neighborhood**132

Where the civic groups’ borders were based primarily on the static
neighborhood topography and jurisdictional boundaries, groups’ composed of low-
inecome residents revealed conceptions of “neighborhood” that were strongly tied to
uses of space. Rather than being organized (solely) by geographical layout, these maps
were organized around embodied experience. (Embodied experience did play some
role in civic group maps, for example, in regard to the metro and their fear of crossing
over 16th street into the adjacent neighborhood, but to a much more limited extent.)
In other words, they were strongly based on activities in which map drawers
participate on a frequent basis, and places where such activities occur.

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132 Parts of this section were published in Schaller and Modan (2005).
Latina/o mapmakers, for example, defined the contours of the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area through structures of feeling, and through this construction of “neighborhood” they pierce the official demarcations present in the civic group maps to establish a larger, more fluid area as “neighborhood” (See Map 12 and 13).

For example, while most of the Latino/a mapmakers, who resided in the official Mount Pleasant, excluded the wealthier, predominantly single-family dwelling areas west of Mount Pleasant Street, they included Columbia Rd., a commercial corridor located southwest of the official Mount Pleasant borders and within the official boundaries of Adams Morgan.

These mapmakers remarked that they put Columbia Rd. on their maps because “it feels like Mount Pleasant Street;” Latina/o participants also noted businesses on Columbia Road which play important roles in the Latina/o community. One of these participants exclaimed, "Zodiac was the only place in 1985 that you could get Spanish music." Elderly Latina/a participants, who visited a daytime center in Adams Morgan, whether they lived in Adams Morgan, Mount Pleasant or even adjacent neighborhoods similarly mapped the area to create a Latino/a space that spanned both Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant. Thus, from these perspectives, the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area is predominantly a Latina/o place, a place that straddles the official boundaries of both neighborhoods.

Similarly, the Vietnamese participants used markers of embodied experience to construct Mount Pleasant as a Vietnamese place. Often 16th St. and Park Rd – the streets with the highest concentration of Vietnamese residents in the area – are drawn as the main axes around which their neighborhood is organized. 16th St. is portrayed not as a barrier, but rather as a thoroughfare, linking Mount Pleasant to Vietnamese institutions and establishments in Maryland and Virginia. It is this neighborhood map’s spatiализation of Vietnamese identity that enables the Vietnamese strip mall ‘Eden Center’, which is in the outer Northern Virginia suburbs, to appear in the map’s center (cited from Schaller and Modan 2005).
Map 12: Latino Senior Day Center Workshop Map, Adams Morgan 2000

Map 13: Latino Resident Workshop Map, Mount Pleasant, 2000
The Latina/o maps and their concurrent explanations reveal a neighborhood that is defined through the multiple functions the commercial corridor serves low-income, in this case “immigrant” residents, as a place to socialize, shop, establish and maintain social networks as well as reinforce their cultural identity, rather than through static government-sanctioned borders. This finding echoes the ethnographic study conducted by Bret Williams (1988) in Mount Pleasant. She called this a “textured” understanding of street life and wherein the daily “work of the street” performed by African American residents, which she categorized as renters, blurred the boundaries between buyers and sellers and consumption and socializing. She contrasts this with the understanding of Main Street brought to bear on political activism by new homeowners, who are predominately White (76-99). Interestingly, while the conflict over historic districting occurred in Mount Pleasant in the early 1980’s, historic districting processes, specifically sanctioned under the Mayor’s July 2006 Draft Comprehensive Plan, are either underway or have been approved in the sub-neighborhoods of Kalorama Heights, Washington Heights and Lanier Heights in Adams Morgan. As one mapping participant, a Latino tenant, remarked,

Actually where we live, they want to call the neighborhood Washington Heights. They don’t want to be from Adams Morgan because of the diversity. Historic Washington Heights or Kalorama Heights, they don’t want to be with Adams Morgan.

This reassertion of neighborhood identities predating desegregation, nonetheless, threatens to supersede the progressive history and identity embodied in the name Adams Morgan, which for many still reverberates with complex meanings, associated with the important historic struggles for racial equity, neighborhood organizing against urban renewal, and the formation of a Latino space in DC. Thus, imaginative and
material practices conjoin to re-inscribe inequities into the spatial configuration of the neighborhoods contours.

**Conflicting Perceptions of Neighborhood Space**

The various mapping groups conceived of ways to use neighborhood spaces – particularly the commercial corridor – quite differently. While the low-income resident groups did not define spending money as an integral component of socializing in neighborhood space, for members of the civic group and participants of the professional class, a considerable amount of such socializing was discussed as connected to consumption, particularly food and drink.

The Vietnamese and Latina/o mapmakers’ socializing in neighborhood space leads to a different perception about what neighborhood space is for. Those who frequently use neighborhood spaces such as sidewalks, building stoops and the park, talked about these sites as places “to hang out” and “meet friends;” contrariwise, those who don't tend to socialize in such spaces tended to link appropriate use of neighborhood space as to whether or not people have a legitimate goal. For example, one member of the White civic group remarked, on Mount Pleasant Street, people are just hanging out idly; you get the sense that they're up to no good. It’s depressing that people don't have any other things to do with their time.” This view relies on a deficit model, a model that also undergirds BID-type renovation projects. People socializing in neighborhood spaces, public and interstitial spaces, such as building stoops, fences and sidewalks, from this perspective, simply do not have the resources to engage in other activities (cf. Modan 2002, Modan and Schaller 2005). Yet, this conception of neighborhood space on commercial corridors as a venue primarily suited for market-based interactions contrasts starkly with the other groups’ narrations, which describe the pleasures of running into friends, talking on the street, rollerblading on the basketball court, and listening to mariachi musicians in the park.
The civic group’s view that such uses of neighborhood space are inappropriate leads to a common but inaccurate conflation of hanging out in public space with disadvantage, drunkenness, and suspicious or illegal activities: Civic group members describe “people entering stores, people buying things, having a purpose” as “more comforting”. It is exactly these sentiments that have been incorporated in the neighborhood BID’s emphasis on an increased security force and more stringent loitering statutes as exemplified by the Adams Morgan, Georgetown and Capitol Hill BIDs. (Schaller and Modan 2005)

While the civic group’s characterizations of neighborhood space in the mapping project are quite anomalous in comparison with the other mapmakers, in the context of local public discourse about Mount Pleasant street, the civic group’s ideas about appropriate and inappropriate behavior are consistent with the views of Mount Pleasant’s more wealthy and well-connected residents. An analysis of emails on the Forum about safety, cleanliness and orderly conduct on and around Mount Pleasant Street further exposes the ethnic and class tensions surrounding competing claims made on neighborhood space.

In discussions of community controversies in public sites such as the email Forum, Mount Pleasant residents frequently cite socializing on the street without consuming as problematic and threatening behavior. Furthermore, their proposed interventions to get rid of such behavior often entail the restructuring of neighborhood space in ways that are removed from an inclusive public accountability. This is another way that the attitudes towards methods of urban redevelopment incorporated in the neighborhood BID concept and on the part of the professional class in Mount Pleasant reflect and reinforce each other.

A prime example of this phenomenon is discussion about an annual fundraising event planned by another civic organization, a gala catered dinner with a
$50 ticket in the park at the end of Mount Pleasant Street. This event caused quite a bit of controversy in the neighborhood and heated exchanges on the email list. While one commonly promoted perspective on the list highlighted the displacement and the structural (economic) exclusion of the usual users of the park, another prevalent view focused on the ‘reclaiming’ of neighborhood space – by people who did not usually patronize the park – from people using it for ‘inappropriate’ and criminal purposes. But the reclaimers’ view of the park – in the words of one list participant, a place “usually used to drink, sleep, spit, and perform illicit business transactions” – contrasts starkly with perspectives of this same park held by the low-income Vietnamese teenagers and Latina/o tenants as well as the medium-income Latina/o community development workers of the mapping project.

These mapping participants identified the park and the neighborhood streets as a place of leisure where they meet friends, take their children to play, hang out, and where they go to find community. Like their higher income neighbors, some of these residents also discussed the parks and streets as a threatening place where one might encounter violence, but they generally considered danger more likely to be present at night. Some asserted that the neighborhood was not dangerous if one was not alone. While more ‘quality-of-life’ community members like the email writer saw people spending time in neighborhood space – irrespective of the activities they were conducting -- as generally threatening and ‘up to no good,’ many of the low-income, Latina/o and Vietnamese mapping workshop participants remarked that people on the street made them feel more comfortable. These participants, for example, commented, “on Mount Pleasant Street I always feel safe, it doesn’t matter what time of day or night,” or “I don’t feel safe on the side streets ‘cause it’s not a lot of people."

Local discourses of neighborhood space are also embedded in racialized constructions of danger. This was present in observations made by both mapping
workshop participants and forum posters. As one Vietnamese teenager remarked, “After 9 pm I cannot go outside because some Black people hate me; they hate some Asians, some Vietnamese people got mugged.” In ascribing the danger to hate, this speaker acknowledges racial tensions in the neighborhood, and thus links danger to larger sociopolitical issues.

On the forum similar constructions are evident. However, whereas the low-income and youth mapping participants’ descriptions tend to focus on actual criminal activities and underlying racial tensions, on the Forum many racialized stories of threat focus on hanging out in and of itself as a problem. As one Forum writer remarks, \(^{134}\) “about the groups of men who hang all day on the fence ... They like to stare threateningly at white males who walk by, and of course they make disgusting comments to any woman who walks by. I imagine most women reading this would feel way safer on any Georgetown street than on Mount Pleasant Street. In Georgetown, they (meaning residents and businesses) do not tolerate drunken loiterers harassing pedestrians. This is not a racist or cultural attack but a discussion about making our street safe for us and our children.” The speaker, a self-described homeowner “recently moved into the neighborhood,” shows his discomfort with different people and distinct modes of using neighborhood space by constructing young Latino men as threatening potential criminals although no criminal act has yet occurred.

The writer continues that “there is little the police can do unless there is an assault or something,” (as the behavior of these men is not actually criminal), and he poses several public and collective solutions. What is key about his suggestions is that, they are suggestions that would reconfigure the physical space on this contested

street corner by means that are removed from public accountability. One such strategy that the writer offers is “to remove the fence,” offering to “do the work for free,” thus situating himself as a good neighbor. He goes on to suggest that the installation of “bright lights would probably disperse them a bit,” presumably by increasing public surveillance. Lastly, he ’jokingly’ remarks that he has “seriously considered getting several of my male friends to ‘occupy’ the fence for an afternoon.” In setting up a comparison between Mount Pleasant and Georgetown, a wealthy, predominantly White neighborhood, the writer reveals his aspirations for the neighborhood; at the same time he asserts the right to lay a physical claim to neighborhood space, even though the fence is the private property belonging to the Latino market on the corner.

By gendering the discourse and inserting the disclaimer that “this is not a racist or cultural attack,” (thereby, contrary to his claim, bringing race and culture into the discussion and highlighting them as potentially relevant lenses through which to read his comment) he frames his commentary in terms of the public welfare while reinforcing commonly held cultural stereotypes. Yet, as one woman in the neighborhood pointed out, verbal harassment, while never acceptable, is not culturally determined. She wrote, “I have never met anything in Mount Pleasant I have not heard elsewhere in the city. The same thing goes on Friday and Saturday night in Georgetown, Adams Morgan, and Foggy Bottom. White Boys do it too, ______.”

What some women also objected to was the mobilization of interests, ostensibly theirs, to delineate cultural boundaries. This sentiment was reiterated in ANC meetings and staff meetings at the CDC. While verbal harassment, in most women’s assessment, was not welcome, neither was the attempt to circumscribe the phenomenon in a

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cultural, racialized frame because this act potentially forecloses inter-group discussions.

Marketing Diversity, Commodifying the Adams Morgan Landscape

The preceding section describes the intra- and inter-neighborhood conflicts that exist in ethnically and class diverse neighborhoods. These conflicts are rooted in the different ways in which people perceive their interests, construct their notion of neighborhood life and experience inter-group relations. Thus, diversity, at the same time as it engenders conflicts, also offers opportunities to increase inter-group sensitivity and understanding. In this section, I discuss how the BID’s the mobilization diversity as a marketable commodity contrast with the sense of diversity of long-time residents and merchants.

The Adams Morgan Partnership BID’s stated goal is to “enhance the image of the neighborhood as a destination for visitors.” Despite intense gentrification over the past two decades, Adams Morgan still carries the cachet of “diverse,” and it is one of the city’s major entertainment districts.

I think they would describe it as in the past as a very diverse neighborhood, but I think it has lost its diversity; now, it is more of a nightclub, more of a place to come for evening events. They look on this neighborhood as semi-culturally diverse in that we have African, Indian, Italian, diverse foods. In terms of the food itself one would use the term diversity.136

When we came here there was a larger diversity in terms of people and shops, fewer restaurants, more retail, more of a place to find things that was not

American. It has lost that homey kind of community to us and it’s heading more toward mainstream kind of [place].

Diversity in the eyes of residents and long time merchants as the quotes indicate, however, signifies much more than ambience. It means a complex social fabric made up of people, businesses and places, shaped by the interactions they sustain with one-another. This sense of diversity is experienced as under threat or already gone.

The BIDs marketing strategy builds on an image of this fading diversity but has created one that is exoticist and commodifies it. The focus of the BID as exemplified by its budgeting priorities and neighborhood marketing focuses primarily on the 18th Street commercial corridor and secondarily on the West side of Columbia Road. This area of Adams Morgan, particularly 18th Street, has evolved into a nighttime restaurant and club corridor that attracts visitors from without the neighborhood.

The image of Adams Morgan that is promoted through the BID, Adams Morgan Main Street and DC government agencies marketing its neighborhoods describes Adams Morgan in the following terms:

From unusual stores to diverse ethnic cuisines, funky furnishings, to one-of-a-kind finds, this urban neighborhood is an attraction in itself. Like its inhabitants, the flavor of Adams Morgan is spicy and alluring.

As the neighborhood becomes a commodity to be sold to visitors ready to consume the atmosphere, residents become pieces of the commodified landscape, rather than community members with their own interests and concerns. The words “attraction” and “alluring” in this quote present Adams Morgan and its residents as objects to attract others. The marketing effort, thereby, directs the focus of attention to visitors and away from people already in the neighborhood.

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137 Interview: 18th street Merchant, July 2006.
Insiders and Outsiders: Creating Spaces of Avoidance

One of the questions in the mapping workshops asked participants to describe their neighborhood to someone not living there. “What image would you want other people to have of the neighborhood?” Interestingly, comments invoked the concept of place-marketing even though I had not voiced my interest in the BID yet. It is telling, nonetheless, that a number of respondents framed their answer in terms of marketing the neighborhood to consumers and potential residents. Responses to the questions highlighted a recurring theme. Participants repeatedly framed neighborhood belonging in terms of insiders and outsiders. The mapping participants marketing comments, for example, highlight common defensive attitudes towards outsiders:

What image would I want], to draw them [visitors] in, or keep them away?

Two signs that the neighborhood should have – the community’s diversity, synonymous with being the most diverse neighborhood (I don’t know if that’s true anymore); I always thought that that’s what the neighborhood should be. Then the second sign on California: Welcome to Adams Morgan, but for God’s sake don’t move here!

If I were marketing this place I’d show a girl coming out of Shake Your Booty [shoe store], Rumba [Café], with drinks on the table, I’d have all the diverse shopping and eating, drinking, having a good time. I wouldn’t take that picture on Saturday night, where that same girl is throwing up into a garbage can!

The insider-outsider dichotomy is particularly interesting because it turns the BID’s clean and safe discourse on its head. Here, the very visitors who are sought after by the BID have created among residents a culture of spatial avoidance. As one resident explains,
Lots of people coming into 18th Street affect how you walk around—changes how you live on the weekends, patterns change. I’ve not been willing to give up that. I actually feel pretty safe. Interestingly I feel it more as the neighborhood becomes more affluent. … It’s a different sense of community. It feels less safe now.

This contradictory statement of the person who feels at once safe and unsafe, and who is adjusting her movement patterns in the neighborhood embodies the desire not to confront danger, but at the same time she expresses the determination to lay claim to her own neighborhood. She does not want to give up a feeling of safety, even when the environment works against that feeling.

Mapping participants and merchants, particularly those who own day-time or evening businesses as opposed to bars and clubs, expressed the feeling that Adams Morgan was becoming a space *invaded* by outsiders. These outsiders, however, in the perception of residents, local officials as well as merchants, don’t know how to act responsibly and therefore are not welcome. The sense of invasion, moreover, was seen as the root-cause for why individuals were adjusting their movement patterns of every day life; thus, the creation of spaces of avoidance was practiced by merchants and residents, alike.

Daytime merchants, in particular, feel besieged by this new, commercial atmosphere. While they generally appreciate the cleaning service because they no longer have to clean up the mess left by night time revelers, they are concerned about the general change in atmosphere and the perception of danger that has been created.
During the nighttime liquor and drugs bring in an element of danger. In the past five years, it has changed, kids from the outside, they don’t know how to behave, they have no manners.\textsuperscript{138} What became clear from the research, then, is that there is a strong perception among neighborhood residents and business owners that ‘outside elements’ are making the neighborhood unwelcoming to them from Thursday evenings until Sunday morning. Residents, local officials and merchants underlined their fear that an accidental bump-in on a crowded sidewalk could put them in danger. On the Adams Morgan list-serve, questions about drunken yelling and ensuing fights on the streets adjacent to the commercial corridor abound. Several of the mapping participants pointedly talked about the streets covered with pizza crusts, trash, and vomit, on the mornings after. How then is a Neighborhood Business Improvement District in their interest, some of them wondered? As one resident explained when we specifically asked about the BID, 

I think it has some good things, but it looks too outerly -- well you know you have 16,000-plus people here. Yes you want to bring people in but you also need to focus on the people who live here.

The problem with the BID is not simply that it’s focused on visitors to the exclusion of residents, but also that it’s focused on creating visitors as consumers, consumers who coming to experience the Adams Morgan “spice” and seem to exhibit no sense of responsibility to the neighborhood.

The before and after photos in a presentation of the BID that the director gave to the Washington Economic Partnership while the before picture showed people walking among litter, the after picture depicted Adams Morgan as a tropical island

\textsuperscript{138} Interview: Merchant in Adams Morgan, July 2006
devoid of people. This image of the island frames Adams Morgan as a fantasy-place to be re-imagined by the people who venture there from the outside. It also lays out Adams Morgan as a playground for the entertainment of visitors rather than an inhabited social political and commercial space that produced through everyday practice, the engagement and avoidance of conflicts and also, hopefully, by continual dialogue. The interests furthering this image are businesses, merchants who have an economic stake in attracting visitors who seek a chic environment filled with music and food from around the world, and who want to consume alcohol. Another interest group is represented by commercial property owners, who rightly view night-time establishments and restaurants as profitable and, therefore, have a stake in managing the atmosphere in such a way that the reveling and potential, attendant disorder are minimized. This later sector, however, unlike the merchants already established on the commercial corridor that supported the BID, may be just as willing to restructure the commercial space into a daytime high-end retail environment. Just since I concluded my research, several high end-retailers have signed leases in Adams Morgan.\footnote{See Killian, Erin. ‘Upscale Retailers Push their Way into Adams Morgan.” Washington Business Journal. September 29, 2009. Accessed March 1, 2007 at http://washington.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/2006/10/02/story14.html}
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSIONS

We are seeing … a withdrawal from a complex world, deploying self-consciously ‘traditional’ architecture that bespeaks a mythic communal coherence and shared identity in the past. We need, instead, a different kind of urbanism, one attuned to public values and that avoids place making on conservative terms. (Sennett 1997, 161-180)

The exigency of cities to compete in the global economy for investment and potential contributors to the local tax and employment base, Smith (1998) argues, has witnessed the rise of the “revanchist city,” an entrepreneurial city that not only actively promotes the gentrification of its urban physical and social landscape but also actively dismantles the social and democratic rights of its most vulnerable citizens. Real Estate development, in particular, Smith (2002) asserts, lies at the heart of the “city’s productive economy” (443); the institutional arrangements that underwrite this pathway of development, he posits, represent the “the victory of certain economic and social interests over others” (444). This becomes manifest in urban governance relationships.

The discussion of the historical context that has shaped neighborhood life in DC allows us to better understand the structuring of power both on the city and the neighborhood level. Ideologies of place are rooted in these structural inequities; thus, entrepreneurial economic development strategies rooted in the notions of self-help and competition can in this context, I argue, serve to further harden the lines that have been drawn in DC and its MSA. DC, made up of particular place experiences that have been conditioned by successive strategies to reap economic benefit (accumulate capital) from the production of urban spaces, nonetheless, tends to spawn new contradictions (Lefebvre 1991). The historical context then gives us a sense of both
the inequities that have been structured into the city and the ways they have been repeated.

This dissertation project began with the thesis that neighborhood-level BIDs through the marketization of neighborhood space, the reification of boundaries and the constriction of participation may reinforce inequities by redistributing power and benefits to ‘elite’ sectors, such as commercial and residential property owners. The nested case study of the use of BIDs in DC complicates this simplistic formulation.

The use of BIDs on the city level, I proffer, does represent an institutionalization of a governance partnership that aims to re-imagine as well as make more secure the downtown, central city and mid-city neighborhoods to attract new residents. This strategy is explicitly implemented to mitigate the risk, in different ways, both for owners of property and consumers of the space. For the former, BIDs are structured to induce, secure, and grow their investment. For the latter, BIDs are to create exciting yet “safe” spaces with specific amenities to facilitate an idealized urban life-style.

The neighborhood-level case study of Adams Morgan, at the same time, illustrates that collective interests around the production of urban places are shaped not only by property ownership but also by the day-to-day practices and experiences in the neighborhood. Ethnicity, class and culture have historically structured ideologies of place; furthermore, length of tenure and the initial motivation behind locating in a given neighborhood or on a commercial corridor condition interests.

The theme of boundaries, boundaries that separate people, functions, interests, and identities, runs throughout the history of Washington, DC’s neighborhoods. They constitute official boundaries drawn by the state, boundaries established by private capital and boundaries established in the minds of individuals and communities and reinforced in their everyday life. The confluence of capitalist social relations, political
movements and counter movements and the tactics used by incoming and “defending” populations to establish symbolic claim on the area has wrought tremendous change in urban neighborhoods. At the same time, the analysis of the Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant area demonstrates the coherence discernable in the American capitalist development of urban space, the recurring claiming of bounded territory for the purpose of securing accumulative interests.

While the Adams Morgan neighborhood BID might regulate public life on the street as it has in Georgetown, while it may increase the perception of safety for certain visitors and restructure the business environment to suit their preferences, it may also suppress the varied expression of human interaction, run counter to the preferences of local residents, and constrain the capacity of small businesses to stay afloat, thereby inflaming already existing conflicts. On the other hand, as new residents and merchants move in, residents and merchants, not rooted in the neighborhood’s progressive organizational history, the themes may shift, and revolve around the extension of services into residential areas. The creation of a community improvement district, which would tax residential properties might becomes an agenda item – the process is already underway in Mount Vernon Triangle and the mixed use development projects there. The arrival of high-end, daytime retail may signal another transition in Adams Morgan. A balance of daytime and night-time retail experience may prompt newer, more affluent, residents to join in overt support for the BID through contractual agreements to extend services into the residential areas.

While Mount Pleasant, for now, is not part of a neighborhood BID, both the executive director of the neighborhood’s Main Street Program and the an executive from the Downtown BID in July 2006 predicted that Mount Pleasant and adjacent Columbia Heights will soon have BIDs. Mount Pleasant, at the time of the research, is still a commercial corridor that caters largely to the low-income, immigrant resident
consumers and those consumers who travel to the neighborhood because they had a history there. The conflicts that emerged during the mapping project and that are evident from the Mount Pleasant Forum, evidence a higher degree of intra-community conflicts rooted in ideologies of place structured through property ownership and filtered through attendant cultural lenses. Examining the conflicts around the atmosphere and use of this commercial corridor illustrates the pattern by which the varied networking activities crucial to the survival of low-income residents as well as the current locally-focused small business owners may be displaced by alternate, middle class and elite conceptions of urban space.

A large portion of the neighborhood Adams Morgan BID’s budget today is allocated toward security or ‘good will ambassadors.’ Given the tensions on Mount Pleasant Street, however, the potential institutionalization of privatized security could come to serve the interests of a few residents, namely those newer residents, who tend to be White American and who have an interest in creating a commercial environment more suitable to their consumer preferences as well as secure property values by maintaining a “middle class” sense of appropriate behavior and aesthetics.

In a neighborhood, like Mount Pleasant, a BID could create an inward-focused surveillance culture. Community activists, for example, predicted that this type of surveillance would focus on dispersing people assembled in small groups through the enforcement of ‘loitering’ regulations. Furthermore, as Williams (1988) pointed out in her study in the 1980’s, small business owners are dependant on the “work of the street.” This “work,” however, to some newcomers seems threatening. Thus, neighborhood BID security measures on this commercial corridor could disrupt current street life, characterized as much by widespread public enjoyment of leisure activities such as listening to music, catching up with friends, attaining work, arguing about local, national, and international politics, and renewing and strengthening social
networks and support systems as it is by public drinking. Mount Pleasant serves as a lesson in caution. Due to its current character, its residential demographic diversity as well as its commercial corridor where small, minority-owned merchants still predominate, as the preceding chapters indicate, a BID may catalyze a more rapid transition of the commercial corridor.

Neighborhood BIDs, I have argued, as currently formulated, restructure urban space in such a manner that neighborhoods become expressive not simply of the interests of commercial property owners but rather of a constellation of interests that seek to capitalize on a transitioning neighborhood. In the long term, however, as Adams Morgan seems to indicate, by devising economic development strategies that support these interest groups, the resulting production of consumer-oriented urban places subsumes the complexity of the social and political fabric that constitute place; it, consequently, reinforces a spatial reconfiguration in accordance with the neoliberal restructuring of the urban economy and spatially reproduces the social relations necessary for the accumulation of capital (Zukin 1995).

Although the aim of neighborhood BIDs may be to “rationalize” the public space to appeal to a preconceived consumer citizen, this very act of privatization engenders contradictions and the search for new forms of political and social assertion (Holston 1995). The case study however further serves to illustrate that the nature of how neighborhood identities and neighborhood spaces are negotiated becomes inextricably intertwined with an expanded conceptualization of citizenship that goes beyond its formal exercise and finds expression in what Holston (1995) terms “insurgent spaces” and Evans and Boyce (1992) refer to as “free spaces” in which democratic spatial practices work to enact social transformation.

Neighborhood spaces have the unique capacity to function as “free spaces” where citizens can confront one another and engage conflict directly. In Mount
Pleasant, for example, a group of activist residents occupied Lamont Street park for one evening. Through drama, they confronted and engaged the multiple forms of racism, sexism and property interests that they observed in the daily practice of local residents, politicians and businesses as well as in the discussions on the neighborhood email forum. Through parody, biting humor and channeled expression of anger, they created moments of intense discomfort and of hysterical relief. At the same time, their work also engaged people on the plaza in open debate about these issues rather than allowing their further privatization. Like the emperor without his clothes, the audience is (we were) stripped naked and confronted with their (our) own complicity in reproducing a system of economic, social and political inequity.

DC’s government officials seem to have embraced the concept of BIDs, yet, they did express unease. One official stated that he preferred the Main Street model for DC’s neighborhood, commercial corridors because it lent more credence to, and advocacy for, the specific concerns of small, locally-focused merchants. In 1998 Citizen’s Report (cited in Chapter 6), in the early phases of BID development in DC, a report while promoting BIDs as vehicles for place-making, proffered the following:

To succeed in promoting neighborhood commercial districts, merchants need to be organized to provide cleanliness, safety, and a pleasing environment for shoppers, workers, visitors, and residents. The new Business Improvement Districts — Downtown DC, Golden Triangle, and now Georgetown — point the way to a new model of accomplishing this important task.

The report, however, also urged the development of alternative institutional models. This is the work that has yet to be done. One model might be a Business and Resident Improvement District (BRID), a district that would include tenant

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merchants and residential renters in its governance. In Ithaca, New York, the BID, for example, includes residents and tenants on the board. This model, however, in order to include these sectors of the neighborhood population, would require an arduous planning process, which would have to be supported by the public sector. One BID executive already foresaw the need to use general tax revue funds to support the work of small, neighborhood-based BIDs and projected the idea of the community improvement district (CID), partially funded by assessments on residential properties:

We have been asked to advise the H Street BID, but what’s going to have to happen, there is basically going to have to be general tax revenues that are somehow going to be tapped for the neighborhood ones because they are so low-density. We haven’t really crossed that bridge yet here in the District. Let’s look at H Street, where clearly the businesses are generating cash revenues for the city, the businesses can make a contribution to improve the services; but, the city should be willing to put some general tax revenues in there to increase the sales tax revenues.

You would think that people in the neighborhood would be willing to contribute as well. And so that a BID or a community improvement district (CID) where you start taxing residents and not only the businesses. There is no one who has really attempted to go after single family homes…And then you can pool those resources together to get cleaner and safer streets than the city otherwise can provide. For the last five years the neighborhoods have been coming to the city. They are wrestling with this.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{141} Interview: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Downtown BID and Executive Director of Mount Vernon Triangle BID, July 2006.
What is interesting in this commentary by the BID executive is the recognition that the city will have to infuse neighborhood BIDs with general tax revenue funds, that is to serve a redistributing function. This allocation of tax revenues into organizations largely run by property owners, whether residential or commercial, as this dissertation has argued, reinforces exclusionary patterns that have deep historical roots (Mallet 1994).

DC, however, does have local governance organizations on the local-level that are part of the municipal government structure, namely the Neighborhood Advisory Commissions. Some ANCs are attempting to expand their democratic reach to currently excluded sectors of the neighborhoods they represent. The ANC in Mount Pleasant, for example, is attempting to legalize the election of legal, immigrant residents, who are not citizens, as commissioners.142 If general tax revenue funds are to be used in DC to encourage the development of and subsidize the operation of neighborhood BIDs, a BRID organized through the vehicle of the ANC may be a way to ensure equity in the redistribution of these resources.

The ANC formally represents both residential renters and owners, however, at this moment it does not represent local merchants. Yet, the Mount Pleasant ANC works with businesses through a committee structure. Since property owners, as is widely recognized, generally pass down the assessment to their tenants, the incorporation of those who really pay in the establishment as well as management of the area’s resources is crucial to ensure greater equity. The establishment of a BRID would require a more broadly-defined, participatory planning process that includes merchants, residential tenants, as well as commercial and residential owners in the

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142 Some of the ANCs have also begun to secure ways to offer translation services during their meetings.
development and approval of its business plans as well as guarantee their voting representation in its governance structure.
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