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A capstone thesis paper submitted to the Executive Director of the Urban & Regional Planning Program at Georgetown University’s School of Continuing Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Masters of Professional Studies in Urban & Regional Planning.

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ABSTRACT

This research is based on the premise that capturing true identity of place is an integral requirement for achieving competitive advantage in urban development and design. With particular focus on the neighborhood scale of the urban domain, this paper analyzes elements that define place identity while arguing that neighborhoods whom clearly define and balance place image and urban design are more likely to achieve competitive advantage and exponential economic growth. With analysis of the evolution and neighborhood design of NoMa and Capital Riverfront neighborhoods in Washington DC, this research demonstrates the economic importance of managing neighborhood identity and how it informs competitive advantage. While establishing the importance of place identity in designing successful neighborhoods, this research also distinguishes between place identity development and traditional product branding. In making this distinction, this paper presents organic place identity development as a precursor for attracting tourism, investments, talent and trade in an increasingly globalizing and competitive world. Through best practices and findings from case study analysis, this paper reconstructs the theoretical framework of place making and branding and proposes an organic place identity development Model (OPID). This model involves itemizing constituents of community, economic activity, historic elements and the built environment as integral elements of organic place identity development. In essence, the position advanced through this research is that ensuring competitive advantage through organic place identity development should be recognized as an integral element determining performance of urban areas in competition at the city, regional and national levels.

KEYWORDS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do urban planners leverage existing neighborhood history and identity into an economic advantage?
2. How do neighborhood-based place identity management strategies inform economic development practices?
3. How can contemporary neighborhood development strategies associated with “place identity” be evaluated in the context of the competition for investment between revitalizing neighborhoods?
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INTRODUCTION

In the end, it is all about attracting people – Visitors. People who want to experience a place in order to be inspired through being relaxed and absorbed in its culture, or to determine whether they would want to live there, invest there or trade products from there.

- Robert Govers and Frank Go, Place Branding: Glocal, Virtual and Physical Identities, Constructed, Imagined and Experienced

Due to the evolutionary nature of place identity development, capturing the idea of true identity of place seems only achievable by taking into consideration the various and dynamic elements constituting place identity formation. Some of such elements include culture, history, community and shifts in the nature of urban economic activity. These elements have together over time influenced the nature, design and character of the built environment while playing an integral role in the rise and fall of cities, downtowns and neighborhoods. Such changes- most of which have been direct products of globalization and other socioeconomic realities- have had ample impacts on the evolution, design and character of urban areas. Such impacts are manifest in events such as the labor migration to cities sparked by industrial revolution -leading to the first industrial cities like Manchester England- or the massive rural to urban migration in cities like New York, Detroit and Cleveland. The impact of such shifts in socioeconomic trends have in the past made it important for cities and urban areas to reshape in order to adapt to these disruptions -specifically the shift from industrial economies. While some cities and urban areas have been able to survive and adapt quicker to such changes, others have not fared too well.

It can be argued that urban areas whom have survived economic disruptions are those that have been able to create, manage and sustain place identities thereby realizing their competitive advantage. This is simply because true place identity serves as a unique attribute of place, which cannot be copied or reproduced, and so urban areas whom have nurtured and grown their place identity are able to better harness exponential economic development and growth. This economic
advantage is depicted in high levels of urban productivity accompanied with distinctive urban design and character - correlates of agglomeration economies. New York, London and Paris are few examples of such cities that have earned reputations as centers of advanced economic activities and trade.¹ The argument advanced in this paper is that cities are able to become more successful than their global competitors if they are able to find, nurture and manage their competitive advantage and through this achieve agglomeration economies.² This perspective and interest emerged from the realization that all urban areas possess a set of unique attributes sometimes overlooked or considered unimportant in urban design. In this research, I explore the added economic importance of such elements to urban character. More specifically, this research focuses on the important role neighborhoods in competition play and how it leads to the city as a whole achieving competitive advantage. In order to clearly depict the constructs of competitive advantage, this research analyzes the formative elements of true place identity at the neighborhood level and how these elements can be managed and operationalized to achieve competitive advantage.

Cities are agents that stimulate innovation, creativity and productivity and with productivity becoming an important rubric for measuring city performance, the ability of cites to achieve greater productivity would be determined by access to competitive advantage and ability to survive in regional and global markets. This simply means that cities whom are able to provide high quality of life, with additional place specific distinctions will be better placed to achieve competitive advantage through attracting foreign direct investments, skilled professionals and hereby achieving higher economic productivity.³ This highlights the need for regions, cities and

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³ Urban world: Mapping the economic power of cities. McKinsey Global Institute, 2011. pg 1
neighborhoods to rethink urban design, identifying elements that would attract visitors, skilled individuals and firms to choose a location over another. This can be achieved by identifying and building on urban competitive advantage through defining and refining place identity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the perspectives shared and interest shown by Uwe Brandes throughout the duration of this research and throughout the program. The model of leadership and excellence you portray is one worthy of emulating.

Thank you, Michal Stevens for ensuring I had the full experience and insight of Business Improvement Districts and thank you for making it a point of duty to motivate me and ensure I had access to all persons and resources needed to successfully complete my research. Your selfless approach to teaching and sharing your priceless experiences will always be remembered.

Thank you to the President of the NoMa BID, Robin Eve Jasper, for taking time out to converse with me at length in the initial stages of my research. Your valid insights and knowledge was key in building the foundation of this research.

Thank you, Peter Young, Emily Russel, Diana Villegas and Theo Goetemann for listening to the boringly interesting conversations we had about my research work. Those conversations were important in the continued formation of thought and action throughout the course of this research.

Thank you to Jumoke and Dotun, George and Jacklyn, Rex, Kemisola and Adiel for providing me an escape when life in graduate school became too stressful. Your generosity and kindness was an instant cure to any homesickness.

Words are not enough to express gratitude to my parents, first for setting a high standard of academic excellence and second for providing me the opportunity to have an equal or better opportunity. I am forever grateful for this excellent opportunity.

Thank you to my siblings Toying and Shola for your priceless love and encouragement. We did it!

Thank you to all my friends that kept in touch even with the huge time difference, I truly appreciate you.

Most importantly I am grateful to God for the enabling grace and favor to successfully put forward this body of work and for the opportunity to be part of this great institution; Georgetown University.
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge is the New Steel

Over time, the world economic climate has changed from industrial into one where industrial activities have become less prevalent—post-industrial economies. This is mostly due to the expansion of markets due to advances in transportation and information technology. This has created a socioeconomic climate described by K.J Joseph in the 1990s as “informationalism”, “Space-time Compression”, by Saskia Sassen and that which is generally known among urban scholars as the period ushering in the internet revolution and global division of Labor.4 This change in world economic systems catalyzed the rise of information technology and the seamless movement of goods and services across borders. These trends that have ultimately led to what we now know as the knowledge economy, emphasizes the importance of cities discovering their competitive edge as a requirement for economic survival. Consequently, defining competitive advantage through place identity is one of the most integral urban sustainability investment components of this present time.5

More specifically, achieving sustainability through building competitive advantage in urban areas should include inventing new means of ensuring the growth of economic clusters of innovation and knowledge sharing. This approach would better ensure achieving competitive advantage through urban areas where agglomeration economies and economies of scale are present.

Ultimately, neighborhoods are the incubators of economic clusters that have the potential of securing a level of competitive edge in the knowledge economy for cities and regions both now and in the future.

This naturally creates a situation where neighborhoods in the same city are constantly competing with each other by constantly working towards greater economic development in order to achieve competitive advantage and access a larger market share by attracting new residents, tourists, investors and a skilled workforce. This usually translates into efforts to improve neighborhood quality, establish an improved sense of place, and to ensure neighborhood economic growth.

“Over the past three decades, nations, regions, cities business districts, communities, neighborhoods, urban districts, and other specific locales (places) have become increasingly engaged in fierce competition with other places for finite and valuable resources” (Kotler et al., 1999; van den Berg and Braun, 1999)

This reality coupled with the fact that close to 80% of the world’s population is expected to reside in urban areas by 2030 -with china alone expected to add about 10 mega cities to their existing urban stock- means the competition for larger shares in the global flow of valuable resources would undoubtedly become more aggressive. This includes competition for the location of headquarters of firms, government and private offices, prime residential and retail developments. Ultimately, this means cities that are able to realize, maintain and nurture their competitive advantage will continue to emerge in the forefront of economic development and remain global capital market investment destinations.

The theme advanced in this paper is simply the position that attracting people to place is necessary for both neighborhood growth and sustainability but most importantly; for neighborhoods to achieve sustainability and competitive advantage, they must first define and realize their true-identity of place.  

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Realizing true identity of place is important for neighborhood sustainability and economic development because neighborhoods could easily lose their appeal simply because they lack distinction with other neighborhoods. This also includes the possibility of neighborhoods suffering an identity crises as seen in the case of Jersey City’s downtown. Kevin Lynch has used Jersey City as an example in his book “Image of the City” (1965), where he described the city as an urban area without a definite and definable place image. Such situations -as that seen in Jersey City- create a less conducive environment for achieving agglomeration economies and the survival of creative clusters.

*Place Identity Development: Sustaining Organic place Identity*

The roots of place identity in modern societies can be traced back to the early use and enactment of zoning policies such as the Euclidean zoning in the 1800’s where land was zoned according to uses, in most cases placing similar uses together in a defined geographic location. This was followed by the post-world war II planning strategies championed by modernist urban planners, which favored the segregation of uses. Although cities and urban areas with organic place identity already existed prior to zoning, zoning created a more structured means of designing and planning existing and new urban areas. While the end of the industrial era has created major shifts in economic trends, the zoning policies that advanced segregation of uses have made it even more cumbersome for urban areas to adjust to changing economic trends. Although cities like New York and Chicago were able to swiftly adapt to changes ushered in by the death of distance and the decline of manufacturing industries, other urban areas where uses were segregated and auto dependence was prevalent have struggled in defining their identity, economic growth potential and neighborhood vitality.

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Although New York also had industrial areas, these areas where able to recreate and rediscover their place identities. A good example is the neighborhood South of Huston Street in New York-SoHo. Popularly known as the cast Iron district, SoHo was originally intended to be razed by the city of New York in the 1960’s to make way for a massive urban renewal project that included housing developments and a highway running across the district. SoHo was able to attain organic growth by developing place identity while witnessing a gradual transformation into an artist enclave. Although SoHo was initially designated as a manufacturing zone in the city’s 1961 Zoning Resolution, the initial residents illegally created living spaces out of worn out industrial lofts initially designed to support industrial activities. Eventually, and through gradual growth of the artist community, SoHo was able to support economic clustering of artists, producing contemporary art within the larger range of economic activates in the larger city thereby giving the neighborhood a distinct identity. Still zoned as an industrial area, it was not until the late 1960s that the actual documentation of artist settlement started when the first Co-ops were formed – Co-ops are a type of collective real estate ownership peculiar to New York.

While on several occasions the city tried to move forward with its redevelopment and urban renewal plans for SoHo, they were met with various forms of resistance from affected residents, politicians, and scholars.

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12 Lynch, Maureen. Pg. 18. The most notable proposed project by the city was the Lower Manhattan Expressway “LoMex” championed by Robert Moses. The building of the proposed LoMex highway would mean condemning buildings along the route, displacing residents and businesses across Manhattan from the East River to the Hudson River. Artists in SoHo also organized against LoMex by forming a group named Artists Against the Expressway (AAE) Notable personalities and scholars like Chester Rapkin, the director of the Institute for Urban Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton, congressman Ed Koch, and author of The Death and Life of Great American Cities Jane Jacobs, all stood against the redevelopment plans. They firmly also contested the city’s decision to move forward with LoMex, citing the fact that it could cost the city 1300 jobs with major negative impact - especially on minorities of African American and Puerto Rican populations- as definite negative outcomes.
Eventually the city’s urban renewal proposals of the 1960s were defeated and SoHo’s place identity was further strengthened when residential loft living for artists was legalized in 1971. This enhanced the process of economic clustering in SoHo as the legalization of residential living and the affordable nature of industrial buildings turned residential lofts created economic clustering. This new cluster of art professionals also led to the relocation of art galleries to the neighborhood in order to be closer to the artists and thus facilitating interaction between artist, dealer and clients. This marked the neighborhood achieving its competitive advantage ensuring continued economic growth and development through the continued benefits of agglomeration economies.

*Defining and Managing Place Identity.*

The next decade in SoHo ushered in an era where due to the neighborhoods economic success, the neighborhoods place identity started to evolve and change. This change was mostly due to the new neighborhood tenants including chain retail stores and market rate housing. As the neighborhood gradually underwent gentrification in the 1980s, Lofts, rentals or Co-ops, were no longer cheap and the new tenants were not artists. By the end of the 1990s SoHo’s era as the avant-garde art center of Manhattan was over and its new identity as a trendy neighborhood for shopping and dining had begun.¹³

“*The real competition for manufacturing space was not the artists, but the commercial enterprises that followed the artists: galleries, boutiques, and restaurants. The distinctive cultural meaning the neighborhood derived from the use of space for either manufacturing or art – was overwhelmed by the homogenizing force of new chain stores and multimillion dollar lofts.*”¹⁴

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In the last 50 years, SoHo passed through stages from illegally occupied residential area to officially endorsed artist enclave to expensive residential neighborhood with the only trace of the neighborhoods identity retained in The Landmark Designation of SoHo in 1973 shielding the neighborhood from real estate development by protecting the cast iron buildings from demolition or substantive exterior alteration.

Peter Hellman wrote, “Now the reason the artists came to SoHo was because it was ignored and cheap. Now it is no longer ignored, and soon it will not be cheap.”15

**Historic Preservation beyond the Built Environment**

Drawing from the evolution of SoHo, it can be argued that if urban areas are to truly realize, nurture and preserve their true identity, a holistic approach to preservation is necessary. This approach would involve efforts to preserve certain elements of both the physical, natural and socioeconomic environment that communicates history, culture, and character. While these elements include architectural designs that communicate the unique character of neighborhoods, historical buildings that preserve and identity and culture, elements of the natural environment that capture and communicate neighborhood character, there is very little tangible means of preserving the socioeconomic elements that served as catalysts of place identity development. Although place identity is not static but dynamic as we see in SoHo’s transformation from an abandoned industrial zone to artist hub and to a contemporary high income, high property value neighborhood- ensuring organic evolution of place identity is a more holistic approach to continuous preservation of history and culture of urban environments. Focusing on the preservation of the built environment and designating buildings as historic simply preserves a single aspect of the urban environment and does not necessarily guarantee a reciprocal

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preservation of core socioeconomic elements. Although neighborhood’s and urban environments that preserve identity of certain historical elements of the built environment still have the potential to be economically successful, the argument here is neighborhoods would have an increased potential to be even more successful and will have higher competitive advantage if socioeconomic elements that catalyzed neighborhood growth and development are also represented in neighborhood economic growth.

*Place Identity Communication: Shaping Organic Growth*

Although current urban planning practices such as historic preservation and affordable housing policies address managing and preserving place identity and character of urban areas, a more comprehensive approach to place identity and place brand management is necessary. This can be achieved by finding new ways to better involve social actors in the place identity development and management process.

Unlike traditional brand management and construction, place identity development involves a process of combining multifaceted identities of various social actors in the urban space in order to construct a place image that is truly representative of the true character of place. Since actors are not solely part of but also traditionally co-producers of place identity, curating such contributions and interpretations is essential to place brand development and maintenance. Understanding and shaping place perceptions of actors in the urban environment is particularly important in urban areas with constantly changing demographics and economic trends and is essential to molding scenarios where continuous organic place identity development can occur.

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In molding organic place identity development, the elements of the urban environment that are separate entities and are significantly distinct must first be identified. This would help in creating a clear picture of what the reputation of place identity is, how actors perceive it and what are the appropriate place symbols that identify the influence of important elements on place identity.

In distinguishing place branding from traditional branding, Anholt (2007) describes a place brand as:

‘the process of inscribing to a place symbols and images that represent that set of central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics that actors have ascribed to that place, thereby creating a focus of identity’.  

This identified “focus of identity” is what would serve as a starting point for managing and molding organic place identity development towards achieving competitive advantage. An ideal focus of identity should be a summation of distinguishable elements that are easily perceivable by both new and existing urban actors. The idea of the “focus identity” is similar to a unique brand proposition in traditional branding -although as stated earlier place branding is significantly different to traditional branding and marketing.

According to Holt (2006), in developing a cultural brand, “the story itself must be the center of strategy, because “the quality of the myth drives the brand’s identity value”. For the brand strategy to influence market results, it must direct what kind of myth the brand will tell and how that brand tells it”. In developing the appropriate narrative (or myth as Holt terms it), Holt (2006) suggests four steps:

1. Identification and targeting the most appropriate myth market;
2. Compose the identity myth;

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3. Extend and refresh the myth over time, through the use of relevant, contemporaneous historical markers; and

4. Reinvent the myth over time in response to socio-economic and ideological shifts. ¹⁸

A step further from constructing and realizing urban identity, an important aspect of place identity development is communicating the identity myth to actors in the urban environment in a format that synthesizes existing perceptions and at the same time gives room for new interpretation.

Although individuals perceive the urban environment differently with perceptions influenced by various elements including previous impressions and experiences, improving the legibility of place image better communicates intended environmental images to actors. Kevin lynch identifies three components of environmental image as identity, structure and meaning. ¹⁹ Lynch also goes ahead to highlight the construction of what he refers to as a mental map as the product of an interactive two way process between the observer and the environment. Through this process of constant interaction, the observer “selects, organizes and endows with meaning what he or she sees”.

“The cognitive map is a means to cope with societies complexities by bridging ‘objective’ and abstract representations of space, and subjective existential experiences of ‘lived space’”. ²⁰

While the role of various social actors in place identity development is integral to achieving a truly representative place image, the challenge remains how to actively communicate place

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¹⁹ Lynch, Kevin. Pg. 125.

identity to a target demographic while conveying a singular meaning of a place brand (including the authenticity of identities, images and experiences).

*Co-creating Place Identity*

Data from a research carried out in by Susie Pryor and Sanford Grossbart from August 2000 to spring 2006 in the CBD of Lawrence in Kansas City suggests that place brands are socially and culturally embedded, and also co-created and refined by social actors.  

In this study by Pryor et al (2007), data through an ethnographic study in the central business district of Lawrence with a population of over 90,000, suggest how multiple stakeholders influence the process of place identity development in the urban domain. The study area (Lawrence’s CBD) which includes both public and private actors and retail business presents an ideal scenario for observations of how retailer and consumer activities along with other urban elements influence place identity development. The researchers observed an active struggle by various actors in the urban domain to “accommodate market innovations while preserving traditional values” in the urban domain or CBD. An example of such struggles include a plan by some landlords and area residents to incorporate chain stores downtown and resistance of small business owners and their customers to this proposal. While both parties eventually came to an understanding, this process shows social actors engaging in co-creation of the urban environment and how it informs place identity. The result of this interaction can be seen in the resulting synthesis in the urban domain of both historic elements and new developments ultimately combining to form a new vibrant downtown.

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"New chain stores even opted for funky, organic auras while establishments such as Liberty Hall, The Love Garden, Waxman Candles and The Replay Lounge remained imbued with character and characters."

Another example of how actors actively co-create place identity in the urban domain from the Lawrence ethnographic research is how actors interpret image symbols using stereotypes pre-constructed by the observer. Through an interview of a downtown retailer, the subject confirmed why he has campaigned for a historic preservation designation for the CBD for more than 25 years, stating the fact that he migrated from Germany to Dodge City in Kansas just when there were massive redevelopment projects in the form of destruction of Victorian town houses. The respondent stated that he was afraid that a similar result would be replicated in Lawrence’s CBD since the new structures in his earlier experience did not look original and had negative impacts on the downtown place identity.

“They worked hard to make something false and became a laughing stock, the butt of jokes.” So he said he did not want to see the same thing happen to downtown Lawrence’ (Interview, retailer, Albert)

The role of social actors in the place identity development process is important to both the establishment and growth of place brand identity. Since social actors are active contributors to place brand identity formulation and are in fact co-producers, it is important to mold a place identity that represents the perceptions and interpretations of place by all social actors in the urban domain. This is on order to avoid what Kevin Lynch (1965) terms disorientation. This concept of disorientation is founded on his theory of “imageability” and the product of legible

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23 Pryor, Susie, and Sanford Grossbart. "Creating meaning on main street: Towards a model of place branding." Place Branding and Public Diplomacy 3, no. 4 (2007): Pg. 300 : While analyzing other influences contributing to place identity development in downtown Lawrence, the research identified “Experiential offerings such as downtown parades, sidewalk sales, Halloween Trick or Treating, and pep rallies consistently exceeds 20,000 consumers” which actively involved actors as co-producers of not merely the form but also the content of place brand and identify development experience and thus creating a sense of community.

place symbols that enable the city dwellers to develop a mental map by recognizing distinct elements in the urban environment that define place. Lynch describes three elements necessary for the formulation of an environmental image and a mental map including “identity (the recognition of urban elements as separate entities), structure (the relation of urban elements to other objects and to the observer), and meaning (its practical and emotional value to the observer)”. A more important aspect of Lynch’s work on environmental image is the concept of appearancy- explained by Stern as “creation of images which by clarity and harmony of form fulfill the need for vividly comprehensible appearance”.

Based on this theoretical framework, it is fair to say that identity myths developed to communicate a vividly comprehensible image while presenting social actors with a highly visible and legible mental place image would better synthesize the perceptions of social actors and place identity. On the other hand, the lack of a vividly comprehensible appearance leads to disorientation expressed through a lack of emotional security, fear and anxiety combined with boring and bland experiences of observers and actors in the urban domain.

An example of such disorientation is the conflict between downtown property owners/residents with the small business owners and customers. The resistance of small business owners and customers in the case of Lawrence KS to the incorporation of chain stores downtown can be associated with a poor communication of a vividly comprehensible appearance or the resulting place image of such developments. Another example of disorientation from the Lawrence ethnographic account was the example of the local Chamber of Commerce dropping its usage of its tagline ‘City of the Arts’. Many local merchants continued its usage while some merchants refused to participate in activities under the new tagline.

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While it is necessary to retain the serendipity in place image development, in order to avoid disorientation, active continuous communication of a place brand myth that takes into account the interpretation and perceptions of actors is necessary in the place identity development process.

*Balancing Growth and Preservation*

While cases where organic place identity development remain a rarity, examples like SoHo NY present the possibility of organic place image development but still highlights the need for continuity in order to ensure achieving competitive advantage through place identity development. Furthermore, examples like Lawrence KS show the complexity that exists in place identity management and development. These complexities can be seen particularly in merging the old and the new through a process of co-creation that produces an evolving place identity. Other attempts to reduce the friction between this process of synthesizing old and new place images especially in terms of economic activity and historical preservation includes the Main street program developed by the National Main Street Center in 1980. The main goal of this program is to assist commercial revitalization efforts nationwide by promoting neighborhood commercial districts, commercial revitalization, and business retention/expansion built on an underlying goal of historic preservation and place identity growth. Examples of successful urban areas under the main street program among others include DuPont Circle and H street Main Street in Washington DC. Both neighborhoods have been able to retain their place identity by combining historic economic activates (neighborhood businesses) with new economic activity and thus achieved a defining place image translating to economic advantage depicted in neighborhood vibrancy and economic value.
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology

In order to determine the importance of neighborhood identity in achieving competitive advantage, a clear measure of what aspects of the built environment inform neighborhood identity must first be established. This was done using the PlaceMaker method of mapping which involves the mapping of elements that do not feature in traditional mapping and which constitute the contemporary identity of the place. Marichela Sepea and Michael Pitt (2013) used the PlaceMaker method in assessing place identity on Oxford Street in London in their research on “Improving livability and attractiveness by preserving place identity in emblematic thoroughfares”25.

Elements of Place identity would be identified through assembly, elaboration and reconstruction of data derived from surveys based on physical reconnaissance, sensory perceptions, graphical elaboration, photographic and video records, traditional cartography and data from neighborhood perception surveys. The result would be complex maps depicting elements that communicate place identity in Capital Riverfront and NoMa neighborhoods.

Description of Selected Method

The PlaceMaker method comprises eight phases – five of analysis and three of design – and a Phase 0 that consists in constructing the grid required for the operations that are to be implemented later. These phases include:

1. Anticipatory analysis: This is a primary investigation of places after the preliminary choice of the city and of the part(s) to be analyzed.

2. Perceptive and denominative description of the elements: This includes five surveys to compile data on character of neighborhood elements that inform place image. These surveys include:

- Denominative survey: collecting data regarding constructed elements (monuments, buildings), natural elements (green areas, trees, and animals), transportation mode (public transit, cars, and buses), and people (tourists, residents, and employees).

- Perception survey: This survey is carried to study how residents, visitors and neighborhood employees perceive and experience the neighborhood.

- Graphical survey: This involves representing the study area according to a visual perceptive standpoint supported by annotations where necessary.

- Photographic and video survey: Photographic and video surveys of the whole study area are carried out, taking care to record facts rather than an interpretation of the places.

3. Identification with traditional cartography of the elements required for area description. This includes the definition of boundaries and neighborhood overview.

4. Identification of place elements perceived by users of study area through analysis of neighborhood perception data.

5. Processing the collected information: In this phase, we analyze the maps produced, the congruence of the various collected data, and choose the useful elements to construct the final map.

6. Identification of identity resources: In this case, the goal is to detect the impact of people, things, activities, and relative relationships, which are sustainable for identity of places. This done by identifying areas on the map where various place symbols that contribute to defining place image collide.
7. Identification of identity resources by users of places
8. Identification of project results: This involves the definition and localization of design intervention

**Associating Place Identity with Agglomeration Economies**

Several metrics can be used in defining economic development in urban areas. This ranges from improvements in the quality of housing and construction, growth in retail and consumer services, rise in neighborhood employment and increase in land values and property taxes. One key element however that signifies success of an urban area is the presence of a critical mass or high population density that supports the supply and demand of economic activities. This is so because population density induces and fosters economic activity. More specifically, density leads to increased demand for housing, retail and other services, while on the supply side, firms and companies will be willing to set up locations close to skilled workforce and auxiliary firms in order to enjoy the benefits of economies of scale – specifically lower productivity costs. This according to the monocentric city model is why Central Business Districts are characterized by a concentration of firms and industries with complementary outputs.\(^{26}\) This concentration leads to agglomeration economies, characterized by a situation where the co-location of firms further reduces the cost of production, generates a large knowledge pool of skilled professionals, fosters knowledge sharing between firms and reduces transportation cost. Furthermore, there are certain pull factors that attract firms to a particular location or that are responsible for agglomeration economies. Aside from urban density, studies show that firms are more likely to co-locate in areas that have a rich pool of skilled labor with a

high potential of knowledge spillover.\textsuperscript{27} Other geographically bounded factors like location of R&D establishments (including universities) and worker commuting patterns are also factors that determine firm location and relocation. In addition, another major factor that firm’s would be keen to find solutions to is the transportation cost. This can be depicted both in the actual amount spent by workers in commuting to work, and the cost of transportation to worker productivity - studies show that American urban areas lose $124 billion yearly to traffic congestion.\textsuperscript{28} These factors necessary for agglomeration economies and thereby define the nature of competitive advantage in neighborhoods and urban spaces. Using the Bid rent theory in the monocentric city model as a qualifier, urban areas that are able to recreate the enabling factors for agglomeration economies such as in the traditional CBDs would increase location value and thereby achieving competitive advantage over other urban areas.\textsuperscript{29} In addition, research shows that office spaces in CBDs grew at a slower pace between 2006 and 2016 while adjacent mixed-use neighborhoods have recorded an increase in office spaces. An example of this is the high absorption of class-A office of 3,236,410 square feet in NoMa Washington DC, as opposed to The Districts CBD gaining only 398,966 square feet.\textsuperscript{30}

In interpreting the criteria for the location and co-location of firms, two fundamental and primary elements include; the availability of a workforce and the presence of an efficient and cost effective transportation system. While the efficient transportation can be achieved through investment in transportation infrastructure, attracting skilled professionals to an urban area hinges on not only the quality of urban residential infrastructure but also more on the ability of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{29} Kraus, Marvin. "Monocentric cities." A companion to urban economics (2006): 96-109. \\
\end{flushleft}
place identity and neighborhood design to support compact walkable neighborhoods with a strong sense of place and access to amenities. The important role of place identity management in these relationship is its ability to communicate the promise of a vibrant neighborhood through environmental design.

**Business Improvement Districts**

Although governments have economic development and planning authorities at the state, city and county level, small scale planning focused on creating successful business districts have the hallmarks of achieving more impactful results due to its local scope and specific focus on community needs.

While we have established the relationship between place identity and competitive advantage, translating the objectives of transportation infrastructure development and skilled workforce attraction into urban design is more achievable through small scale planning.

The Business improvement district model (BID) is an example of such small scale planning process designed to manage the economic growth of places within the city through historical preservation, place identity management, public-private partnerships and other case specific economic development efforts. This are usually set up in a form of special taxing districts where property owners agree to pay a certain tax premium that fund neighborhood economic development programs.31

Through a model designed to reduce restrictions (zoning, and budgeting) and increase flexibility and effectiveness, BIDs are able to aggressively pursue developing more attractive and more marketable business districts within the city.

An important aspect of the structure of BIDs is the focus on retaining the urban areas unique character while pursuing economic development, thereby creating a balance between historical preservation and place identity development. BIDs have become somewhat popular in the US since the 1990s with BIDs in major cities like Chicago, New York, Washington DC and Los Angeles to name a few.

CHAPTER THREE: TOWARDS ATTAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Through a review of scholarly research and contemporary urban planning practice, it can be noticed that place identity and city branding research and analysis has not necessarily translated into city branding practice. In addition to the lack of application of theory to practice is the misconception that city branding and traditional branding are alike or require the same approach. This has led to city brand management campaigns built on approaches of traditional product branding. In addition, there are a number of urban areas that have been able to create, sustain and nurture their place identity and thus translating acquired place image into economic advantage.

In the process of place identity development and formation, it is important to make the distinction between urban spaces that already had predominant economic activity, an active community and a built environment supporting these activities and urban areas whom were either unknown -due to the lack of the afore stated characterization- or whom were categorized as bad urban areas. In such cases, the formation of organic place identity development would require piecing together the existing elements of place and efforts focused on re-grounding place identity. In cases of neighborhoods that have endured a bad reputation, changing such negative perception would be the focus of place identity development interventions.
In an effort to bridge the gap between theory and practice of place identity development, this research involves the analysis of the place identity development process of Capital Riverfront and NoMa Business improvement district’s (BIDs) in Washington DC. Both communities in the last couple of decades have gone through place identity transformation processes that have seen them evolve from unpopular neighborhoods with negative place identities to thriving and vibrant neighborhoods. This Analysis identifies the extents to which agglomeration economies has been achieved in each neighborhood using concentration of a skilled workforce, firms and the existing transportation infrastructure as markers of neighborhood economic growth. In addition, this analysis identifies place symbols that contribute to place identity development. This analysis would be carried out using the PlaceMaker analysis method with the result being a set of complex maps identifying major landmarks while capturing the complexity of place identity, including its tangible and intangible elements, both permanent and temporary. These maps would be used for a final analysis of the two neighborhoods visually representing the level of and opportunity for organic place identity development.

**CASE STUDY 1: CAPITAL RIVERFRONT SE WASHINGTON DC**

*Organic Place Identity Development (OPID) Analysis*

In order to determine the fabric of place identity in Capitol Riverfront, this analysis will include a neighborhood assessment of the constituents of community, economic activity, historic elements and the built environment. Furthermore, the PlaceMaker analysis methodology would be used to present analysis results showing integral elements of organic place identity development.
Figure 3.1 Boundary Map of Capitol Riverfront.
Overview of the Capitol Riverfront

Located just five blocks south of the US Capitol building and 10 minutes away from the CBD, a new downtown on the banks of the Anacostia River is the best way to describe Capitol Riverfront neighborhood. The neighborhood also has a rich history and maritime heritage as the neighborhood was originally the site of the U.S Navy’s oldest shore establishment; the Navy Yard. This included the Navy’s largest shipbuilding and ship-fitting facility in the 1800s and explains the presence of historic buildings in the neighborhood. Capitol Riverfront currently has a population of 6000 residents (anticipated to reach 10,000 by the end of 2018) and was the district’s fastest growing neighborhood in 2016.\(^\text{32}\) In addition, the neighborhood is uniquely located in close proximity to some of the district’s largest employment and residential cores including Capitol Hill, Foggy Bottom, Downtown DC and NoMa.

The Built Environment in Capitol Riverfront

The 500-acre neighborhood has seen major growth in the last few years with developments covering the retail, office, residential categories providing a truly mixed-use neighborhood. While the neighborhood has continued to grow, with three new class A office buildings, over 2,400 residential units and 250,000 SF of retail under development in 2016. The neighborhood is also anchored on a transit oriented development design with the Navy Yard/Ballpark Metro station serving as the main neighborhood metro station while Capitol South and Eastern Market Metro stations are both right at the neighborhood’s boundary. The DC circulator, Capitol Bike Share and a water taxi connecting commuters to important destinations such as union station and the Nationals Park also serve the neighborhood. While capital

riverfront has the I-295 and I-395 highways just north of the neighborhood, the neighborhood remains one of the most walkable urban areas in the district with a walkscore of 98.33

Table: 3.1 The Built Environment in Capitol Riverfront

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Built Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail and Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Incentive</th>
<th>Park is also connected to the Anacostia river walk trail.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canal Park:</strong></td>
<td>This is another green open space in the neighborhood. Canal park also provides Ice skating and a concert venue for residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sports and Entertainment</strong></td>
<td>The neighborhood hosts the Nationals stadium, which is home to the Washington Nationals. This is a major asset for the neighborhood attracting 2.5 million visitors in 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the pipeline</strong></td>
<td>Dc United Stadium, Whole Foods, District Winery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Close Proximity</strong></td>
<td>Capitol Hill, Regan international airport and Union Station are each 10 minutes away from Capital Riverfront. In addition, Downtown Washington DC is only 3 metro stops away from the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The neighborhood is also in close proximity to other major employment centers in the district</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.2 Office and Hotel Uses in Capitol Riverfront

Figure 3.3 Office Uses in Capitol Riverfront
Economic Activities

The economic activities on Capitol Riverfront exist along installations of the United States Navy, which remain the largest single tenant in Capitol Riverfront with its naval support activity (NSA) Location. This in combination with other government offices such as the District of Colombia office of transportation, DC Water and Sewer authority and other Fortune 500 companies constitute the economy of Capitol Riverfront. This amounts to 325,000 SF of existing retail with 250,000 SF under construction and 6,195,000 SF of existing office. While Yards Park & Canal Park as major elements communicating neighborhood character, they also foster and outdoor ethos while presenting family friendly spaces for residents and visitors. Another major neighborhood element projecting neighborhoods place identity is the Nationals Park. The iconic baseball stadium has since when it opened in 2008 become a prime sports/entertainment destination that has “mentally mapped” the neighborhood in a region of over 6 million people.

Table: 3.2 Economic Activities in Capitol Riverfront

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Activities</th>
<th>1. 200 I Office: 350,000 SF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. 1015 Half Street Office: 373,750 SF Retail: 17,350 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. 20 M Office: 180,000 SF Retail: 10,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. 80 M Office: 285,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. 100 M Office: 230,000 SF Retail: 12,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Federal Gateway I Office: 279,000 SF Retail: 21,500 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. 300 M Office: 276,000 SF Retail: 5,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. 55 M Office: 254,500 SF Retail: 13,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. U.S. Department of Transportation Office: 1,350,000 LSF Retail: 1,200 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Lumber Shed Office: 17,350 SF Retail: 14,250 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Washington Navy Yard Office: 2,200,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Maritime Plaza I Office: 200,500 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Maritime Plaza II Office: 160,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Boilermaker Office: 10,600 SF Retail: 30,400 SF</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>One M Office: 111,700 SF Retail: 4,300 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>99 M Office: 225,000 SF Retail: 10,600 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>DC Water Headquarters Office: 151,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>25 M Akridge/Brandywine Office: 247,000 SF Retail: 20,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Retail</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Scarlet Oak, Harry’s Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Bon Chon, CBS Radio, Rose Physical Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Justin’s Café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Congressional Cleaners, Georgetown University, Waterfront Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Courtyard by Marriott, Bistro Lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Lot 38 Espresso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Corncopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. The Big Stick, Subway Café, Wells Fargo Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Gordon Biersch, SunTrust Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Capital One Bank, CVS, Five Guys, Subway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Il Parco 12. 300 M Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Al’s Delicatessen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Fuller’s Barbershop, Las Placitas, Ziaafat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Domino’s Pizza, Wagtime Too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Bank of America, Buffalo Wild Wings, Chix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Hampton Inn &amp; Suites, Top of the Yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Trapeze School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Starbucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Bluejacket Brewery &amp; Bottle Shop, GNC, Hugh &amp; Crye, Nando’s PeriPeri, Pacers Running, Unleashed by Petco, Wells Cleaners, Willie’s Brew &amp; Que, 100 Montaditos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Aura Spa, Bang Salon, Banfield Pet Hospital, Harris Teeter, Penthouse Pool Club, Starbucks, Sweetgreen, TaKorean, VIDA Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. Evo Furniture, Kruba Thai, Potbelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Agua 301, Due South, Ice Cream Jubilee, Osteria Morini, Whaley’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24. Orange Theory Fitness, Slipstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25. The Brig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26. Homewood Suites, Shake Shack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27. Dock 79 (All-Purpose Pizzeria, The Salt Line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28. Arris (Conte’s Bike Shop, Philz Coffee, The Juice Laundry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29. 7th and L Market 30. Dogma Day Care 31. Agora (Whole Foods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32. One Hill South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33. Insignia on M (Bethesda Bagels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34. 1221 Van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35. 99 M (Circa, Open Road)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36. Marriott Residence Inn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37. F1RST Residences (Chipotle, Chop’t, Rasa, Taylor Gourmet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Square 769N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>West Half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>District Winery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>The Bower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Parcel O2 Apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>One M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>801 Virginia Ave SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>DC United Stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>2 Eye Phase I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>The Garrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Showplace ICON Theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>FIRST Retail Pavilion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>41 L Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>1900 Half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Riverpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Parcel L Apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Parcel L Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Square 696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>71 Potomac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Peninsula 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>37 L Street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Development maps by use (4Q 2016): [http://www.capitolriverfront.org](http://www.capitolriverfront.org)
The Capitol Riverfront Community

The Capitol Riverfront neighborhood has a population of 6,000 residents and a daytime employee population of 34,000. This in addition to the neighborhood's ability to attract visitors, creates a vibrant and active neighborhood. This is due to the presence of the National’s ballpark stadium has been instrumental in changing the neighborhood's perception as a bad neighborhood by attracting 2,481,938 people in 2016 alone. This along with the Friday Night Concerts at Yards Park (attracting 22,950 visitors) creates avenue for new interaction between people and place and creates opportunities for place perception reconstruction.

According to the Washington DC neighborhood profile, Capitol Riverfront possesses a highly skilled workforce as residents. This includes 94% high school graduates, 77% with college
In addition, a perception survey of 460 respondents carried out by the Capitol Riverfront BID shows that 55% of residents chose to live in neighborhood mainly because of its location while 15% claimed to have chosen the neighborhood because of its amenities. The reason why neighborhood location seems to be the most important factor driving the decision of present residents include the fact that 44% of a sample size of 426 residents work in neighboring Capitol Hill and close by Downtown.

Table: 3.3 Community Activities in Capitol Riverfront

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nationals Park</td>
<td>Regular Season Home Games</td>
<td>2,481,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nationals Park</td>
<td>Concerts and events</td>
<td>99,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yards Park</td>
<td>Friday Night Concerts</td>
<td>22,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sakura Matsuri Street Festival</td>
<td>Street and New Jersey Avenue, SE.</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Veg Fest</td>
<td>Yards Park</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Snallygaster</td>
<td>First St SE &amp; N St SE</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Truckeroo</td>
<td>Half St. and M St</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Opera in the Outfield</td>
<td>Nationals Park</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. DC Jazz Fest</td>
<td>Yards Park</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>All Things Go Fall Classic</td>
<td>Yards Park</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tour de Fat</td>
<td>136 N St SE, Washington, DC 20303</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fitness Classes</td>
<td>Yards Park &amp; Canal Park</td>
<td>2,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Thursday Night Movies</td>
<td>Canal Park</td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Development maps by use (4Q 2016): [http://www.capitolriverfront.org](http://www.capitolriverfront.org)

**Figure 3.5 Nationals Ballpark Capitol Riverfront**
Figure 3.6 Yards Park Capitol Riverfront\textsuperscript{35}

Figure 3.7 Yards Park Capitol Riverfront\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} http://www.capitolriverfront.org/about/media/image-gallery
\textsuperscript{36} http://www.capitolriverfront.org/about/media/image-gallery
Historic Preservation

Due to the fact that Navy Yard/Capitol Riverfront was home to the U.S Navy’s largest shipbuilding and shipfitting facility in the 1800’s, the neighborhood possesses various historical elements. Although some of these historic buildings have been converted to other uses, a few of them still stand intact and play a major role in projecting and communicating the neighborhoods place image and character.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Elements</th>
<th>Former/present Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Boilermaker Shops (Tingey Street SE)</td>
<td>Former industrial shed that has been renovated as restaurants, support retail, and office space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Foundry Lofts (Tingey Street SE)</td>
<td>Former Pattern &amp; Joiners Shops the building has been renovated as 190 loft apartments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lumbershed Building (Water Street SE)</td>
<td>Former drying shed for lumber the building has been renovated as restaurants on the ground floor and FCW offices on the 2nd floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Building 202 (M Street SE/Tingey Street SE)</td>
<td>This building remains vacant but plans are for it to be sold and renovated for a variety of uses including office and retail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Building 74 (Tingey Street SE)</td>
<td>This two-story structure will ultimately be renovated as office space for the Navy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Building 170 (Tingey Street SE)</td>
<td>This building is part of the Federal DFOT building complex; this historic structure will be renovated as a restaurant/brewery/distillery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lower 8th Street SE (Car Barn)</td>
<td>This former street car storage and maintenance facility will be renovated as the offices and church sanctuary for the National Community Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Arthur Capper Carrollsburg complex</td>
<td>Historic townhomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10. DC Water Pump House                                | a 1907 Beaux Arts style industrial structure located at the terminus of New Jersey Avenue SE. It will continue as a pump house for the life of the structure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Pepco Electrical Generating Plant</td>
<td>This building is located in Buzzard Point and is a large Art Moderne structure located at Half and V Street SW. While decommissioned as a power generation plant, it is still part of the Pepco substation facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The U-Haul Warehouse storage facility</td>
<td>This is an old warehouse repurposed as a storage facility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Three brick industrial buildings</td>
<td>Water truck maintenance and sewer maintenance facilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.9 Navy Yard steam Power Plant
CASE STUDY 2: NOMA NE WASHINGTON DC

*Organic Place Identity Development (OPID) Analysis*

In order to determine the fabric of place identity in NoMa, this analysis will include a neighborhood assessment of the constituents of community, economic activity, historic elements and the built environment. Furthermore, the PlaceMaker analysis methodology would be used to present analysis results showing integral elements of organic place identity development.
Figure 3.11 NoMa Boundary Map
Overview of NoMa

The NoMa neighborhood is a 237-acre urban area carved out as a taxing district set forth for high-density high value developments typical of a great modern urban center. North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMa) was created in 1998 as business improvement district designed to create an infill development between Union station and Rhode Island Avenue. The transformation of the neighborhood in the last decade from an area predominantly composing of car parks old industrial buildings and warehouses, into a vibrant mixed-use district is a prime example of a highly successful transit oriented development. The NoMa vision was anchored on the NoMa Gallaudet-U Metro station, which has naturally proven to be a major investment driving growth and private sector uptake since its opening in 2006.

Due to the neighborhoods strategic location, NoMa has been able to develop into a dense high value neighborhood and a central commercial core with high value investments bordered by other flourishing neighborhoods like Shaw, Florida Avenue, and H-street. Since the opening of the NoMa Gallaudet-U Metro station, the neighborhood has been able to attract major office tenants such as NPR, CNN, Google, and government agencies such as US Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to name a few.

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The Built Environment in NoMa

The major asset of NoMa remains its closeness to major neighborhoods like Capitol Hill and downtown DC and major transportation infrastructure like Union Station - which is a regional connector.

NoMa’s built environment is mostly defined by residential and office uses and its prime location close to major employment centers in the district remains a major advantage. The NoMa Gallaudet-U Metro station has turned out to be a major attraction of both new residents, office tenants and visitors recording an average weekday exit of 9,500 passengers in September 2014 (more than quadruple the 2005 average of 2,200). 38

Table: 3.5 The Built Environment in NoMa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Apartments</td>
<td>The neighborhood currently has 3,863 apartments units with 1,791 currently under construction and 4,000 set to deliver in the next 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Retail and Hospitality</td>
<td>The neighborhood currently has a total of 399,126 SF in Retail uses and 1,791 under construction. NoMa also has 20,000 SF in Hotel space with 110,700 under construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Office</td>
<td>The neighborhoods office stock is by far the major economic development driver. NoMa currently has 12,795,258 SF of Office and 366,000 under construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Transportation Infrastructure</td>
<td>NoMa Gallaudet-U Metro station is the neighborhoods key metro station. Although</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

there is a lack of connection between the neighborhood and adjacent Union station, the metro station remains to be a key asset to the neighborhood with NoMa standing to profit from the redevelopment of Union station’s pedestrian infrastructure, which is set to provide a more direct link to NoMa.

The metro bus, Circulator and Capital Bike share facilities also service the neighborhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Parks and Recreation</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Although the neighborhood has plans in the pipeline funded by a $50 million commitment of the city to the NoMa Parks Foundation, the story park remains the main open space in the neighborhood. Metropolitan Branch Trail is a major asset to the neighborhood and is essential to the planned park and green space developments in NoMa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>In the pipeline</th>
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</table>
|   | **Landmark Theatre**  
**1250 first, Street NE,**  
This is proposed to be a seven-screen art house-style cinema combined with 63,000 SF of retail as well as apartments and Office space. |
|   | **NoMa Meander**  
This is a proposed block long pedestrian retail promenade that runs north/south from Pierce Street to New York Avenue between North Capitol and First Streets, NE |
|   | **Planned transportation infrastructure**  
This includes a new Circulator route, a streetcar stop connecting the neighborhood to other urban areas in the district. A new entrance to connect the NoMa-Gallaudet U Metro Station to Third Street is also in the planned to better connect Union Market to the neighborhood. |
The neighborhood is set to benefit from the high speed rail proposed in the Northeast Corridor and DDOT’s MoveDC vision.

New Union Station Metro Entrance connecting to NoMa as part of union stations pedestrian access upgrade plan.

**Parks**

Plans for new neighborhood parks include Harry Thomas Way and a small public space at the northwest corner of Second and M Streets among others.

| 7 | In Close Proximity | Union Station, Capitol Hill, Judiciary Metro, United states supreme Court, |

Figure 3.12 NoMa Office Locations
Economic Activities

The neighborhoods economy is anchored on the NoMa – Gallaudet U Metro Station. According to the NoMa– Gallaudet U Metro Station Impact Study carried out by RKG Associates, Inc., the economic fabric of the neighborhood includes approximately 3.8 million SF of office space, 183,000 SF of retail, 3,057 residential units and 622 hotel rooms. 39

The BID has also advanced efforts to encourage economic activity in other parts of the neighborhood through its “fill the gap” strategy in 2014. This included interventions like the Lobby Project, NoMa Junction, REI’s Community Space and Lunch Box. Efforts also included pop up locations for businesses including Yoga NoMa, Wunder Garten beer garden and Carpe Librum.

Table: 3.6 Economic Activities in NoMa

|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Au Bon Pain</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Potbelly Sandwich Shop</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Roti Mediterranean Grill</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Watershed Restaurant</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Kitchen on K Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Tynan Coffee &amp; Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Five Guys Burgers</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Café Phillips</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Constitution Café</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The Perfect Pita</td>
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</table>

**Figure 3.13 Uline Arena NoMa**
The NoMa Community

The NoMa neighborhood has a population count of 54,000-day time employees and 3,600 residents living within ½ mile of the neighborhood. The neighborhood's location coupled with the presence of major national employers as tenants makes NoMa a 21-century workplace attracting a millennial workforce and a residential population of 95% college degree holders with more than 60 percent having incomes of over $80,000.

This current demographic configuration currently informs the BID’s decision to advance a neighborhood identity highlighted by the tagline “City. Smarter.”

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Table: 3.7 Community Activities in NoMa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Uline Arena</td>
<td>2.5 acres at Delaware Avenue, M Street and Third Street. 52,000-square-foot flagship store, restaurants, and 171,000 square feet of office space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Landmark Theater</td>
<td>A seven-screen art house-style cinema, 63,000 square feet of exciting retail offerings as well as apartments and office space at the corner of First and N Streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Union Market</td>
<td>Although not within the NoMa neighborhood boundary, residents and visitors to NoMa are set to benefit from Union Market because of its closeness and peculiarity. The market is a 69,000 SF location for artisanal vendors and the Angelika pop-up theater; there are also two full service restaurants in this location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.15 Union market

Figure 3.16 Union market
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Case Study #1 Analysis (Capitol Riverfront)

From the analysis results, it can be seen that place identity in the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood was developed in response to a lingering negative image serving as a significant limitation to achieving competitive advantage through agglomeration economies. This negative identity was sustained and reinforced by high crime rates, low property values and reduced density. Although the Navy Yard neighborhood originally had a metro station - which is a major transportation infrastructure relevant to economies of scale - the neighborhood itself lacked other characteristics that could inform agglomeration economies and ensure neighborhood competitive advantage (skilled workforce, clustering of businesses and firms). While negative neighborhood perception was a major barrier in attracting people to place, reinventing place identity became the necessary context for growing neighborhood competitive advantage. Elements of place identity that have contributed to neighborhood competitive advantage include the following:

1. **Nationals Stadium and Navy yard/Ballpark Metro:** Along with other redevelopment efforts that gradually transformed the neighborhood, form a low-density auto orientated neighborhood to a gradually developing mixed-use district is the opening of the Nationals ballpark. This and the renaming of the navy-yard metro station to the Navy yard-Ballpark metro were essential in reinventing the neighborhood myth and remolding the place identity. This led to a situation where people had to visit the neighborhood to watch the nationals play while at the same time noticing the level of development and positive change that had occurred in the neighborhood.

2. **Yards Park:** Just as the Nationals Stadium, Yards Park was a neighborhood element designed to leverage the unique natural resources pf place while communicating a renewed place identity myth of a welcoming and family friendly neighborhood to
visitors. Yards Park along with preceding retail offerings were efforts particularly
designed with the motive of increasing the visitor experience when in the neighborhood.
This naturally led to wide range perception change and an increased desire of people to
reside in the neighborhood.

3. **Concerts and street events:** Events such as the summer Friday night concerts were
designed with the prime motive of bringing more visitors to experience the neighborhood
and be co-creators in the place identity development process- either by deciding to
become residents, neighborhood employees or simply a neighborhood retail consumer.

4. **Walkable Mixed-Use:** Due to increased demand, the development and redevelopment
of new housing, office and retail units led the emergence of a mixed use district with
increased walkability and that supports all demographic groups.
Figure 4.0 Organic Place Identity Map section A Capitol Riverfront
Esri GIS Online. Nods of high place identity communication, pedestrian traffic, mix of uses, and convergence points were captured during the PlaceMaker analysis and physically mapped using street view. This can be seen by clicking the blue bubble in the Online Map here [http://arcg.is/1zTq5i](http://arcg.is/1zTq5i).
Figure 4.2 Organic Place Identity Map section C Capitol Riverfront
Figure 4.3 Organic Place Identity Map section D Capitol Riverfront
Figure 4.4 Organic Place Identity Map Legend Capitol Riverfront

Place Identity Map Legend

- Planned Development NoMa
- Planned Residential
- Planned Hotel
- Existing Green Space (parks & Recreation)
- Points of Place Identity communication (High Pedestrian traffic, Visual Perception, Convergence points, Mix of activities)
- Historic Buildings
- Green Buildings
- Planned Metro Exits
- Planned Parks
- Planned Commercial
Figure 4.5 Organic Place Identity Map Ledged Capitol Riverfront

Place identity Map Legend

- **M** (metro) Metro Station Entrance
- **VRE** Virginia Railway Express Train Stop
- **M** Metro Bus Stop
- **DC Circulator Bus Stop**
- **Capitol Bikeshare Bike Station**
- **MARC** Marc Train stop
Case Study #2 Analysis (NoMa)

Unlike the Capitol Riverfront, NoMa did not necessarily have a place identity and had to work towards creating one. While the opening of the metro station was a defining factor ensuring agglomeration economies, the neighborhood’s location is one of the most important reasons for its economic success. This is because of the neighborhoods closeness to the CBD has aided an increase in land value while improving the possibility of firms and professional workforce clustering. In addition to the neighborhoods proximity to downtown the opening of the NoMa-Gallaudet U metro station also serves as a major incentive due to its ability to reduce transportation costs and further increase land values.

In relation to the standard urban model, the high value of land in NoMa (due to its location and transportation infrastructure) is mostly responsible for the neighborhoods growth pattern.

Observed patterns include the following:

1. **High-density office and apartment uses**: Although NoMa is a predominantly mixed-use neighborhood, the existing uses are more office and residential with very low amount of retail. This configuration of uses is most likely in response to market forces that determine uses based on land value and limiting investment risks.

2. **Hospitality and Recreation**: Although the neighborhood is smaller than the Capitol Riverfront in term of landmass, there is a noticeable absence of hospitality and recreation uses. While the neighborhood residents profit from having neighborhoods close by provide restaurants, parks and bars, NoMa loses economically in terms of retail leakage to neighborhoods like H-street and Downtown. While it is fair to recognize that the neighborhood is not fully built out, there are plans in place to address underserved
markets, hospitality, and recreation uses would possibly have been developed along with other uses.

3. **NoMa Wi-Fi**: The neighborhood's investment in public Wi-Fi presents opportunities to integrate this resource with other planned development such as parks and public spaces. This has the potential of becoming a major competitive edge for the neighborhood in terms of its ability to promote an outdoor ethos and increase usage of public spaces.
Figure 4.6 Organic Place Identity Map Section A NoMa⁴²

⁴² Esri GIS Online. Nods of high place identity communication, pedestrian traffic, mix of uses, and convergence points were captured during the PlaceMaker analysis and physically mapped using street view. This can be seen by clicking the blue bubble in the Online Map here http://arcg.is/1zmbuH
Figure 4.7 Organic Place Identity Map Section B NoMa

Esri GIS Online. Nods of high place identity communication, pedestrian traffic, mix of uses, and convergence points were captured during the PlaceMaker analysis and physically mapped using street view. This can be seen by clicking the blue bubble in the Online Map here http://arcg.is/1zmbuH
Figure 4.8 Organic Place Identity Map Legend

**Place Identity Map Legend**

- **Red**
  - Planned Development NoMa

- **Yellow**
  - Planned Residential

- **Dark Red**
  - Planned Hotel

- **Green**
  - Existing Green Space (parks & Recreation)

- **Blue**
  - Points of Place Identity communication (High Pedestrian traffic, Visual Perception, Convergence points, Mix of activities)

- **Light Pink**
  - Historic Buildings

- **Green Circle**
  - Green Buildings

- **Black Box**
  - Planned Metro Exits

- **Green Triangle**
  - Planned Parks

- **Purple Box**
  - Planned Commercial
Figure 4.9 Organic Place Identity Map Legend

Place identity Map Legend

- **M** Metro Station Entrance
- **VRE** Virginia Railway Express Train Stop
- **M** Metro Bus Stop
- **DC Circulator Bus Stop**
- **Capitol Bikeshare Bike Station**
- **MARC** Marc Train stop
CHAPTER FIVE: APPLICATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

While the major goal of this research is to present an updated place identity development framework informed by the in-depth analysis of realities within both case studies, certain recommendations for advancing place identity in both neighborhoods have become more apparent through the analysis of research findings.

A. PERSONALIZATION OF THE URBAN EXPERIENCE: While both neighborhoods have employed taglines that represent and project place identity (“City smarter” for NoMa and “DC simplified, life Amplified” for Capitol Riverfront), to further enhance place identity creation and communication, an increased focus on involving urban actors in place identity development (co-creation of place identity) is recommended. Although adopted taglines reflect current demographic trends in both neighborhoods, there is opportunity to ensure that urban actors increasingly identify with the cultural myth and projected place identity –while becoming elements of place identity themselves as was the case in Lawrence Kansas. This enhanced place identity co-creation can be achieved through modeling urban design initiatives created to enhance the ability of urban actors to personalize their urban experience. While this is achievable by creating a mix of uses thus providing various choices to suite various individual lifestyle choices, allowing room for an advanced personalization of the urban experience will not only ensure increased connection between users of space and the physical environment, but would also ensure a synthesis of place identity and self-identity– organic place identity development. A good departure point in framing urban interventions aimed at fostering the co-creation of place identity is the creation of urban designs and elements with the potential of becoming culturally significant and eventually meriting historical preservation. This can be achieved through itemizing the correlates of organic place identity (community,
economic activity, the built environment) as guidelines for urban design of uses and spaces that promote co-creation of place identity.

B. THE COMMUNITY REDEFINED: In addition, an important theme to consider in the creation of spaces that foster the personalization of the urban experience is the role the internet plays in shaping contemporary urban communities. The rise of cyber communities, public cyberspaces, and web 2.0 applications have further redefined distinctions between the built environment and the virtual environment. This has thus created a situation where the internet contributes in the urban actor’s process of sorting multiple sensory or perceptual information and molding holistic impressions. While this could be seen as the “internet based millennial type consumption”, large individualization and a self- service mentality, the potential of leveraging the large community of internet and web 2.0 users in creating urban design and uses that foster organic place identity development should be explored. An example of such synthesis between the built environment and the virtual environment is the Google and Starbucks partnership; such smart pairings can be explored in urban design (Parks, open spaces, community spaces).

C. CONNECTOR CORRIDORS: Although both neighborhood studied, have different approaches to place identity formulation and management informed by peculiar neighborhood problems, they both share the problem of a lack of physical connection to close by neighborhoods. In the case of the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood, it was observed that the neighborhood broke down at the edges close to the Southeast freeway thus reducing the possibility of leveraging pedestrian flow from nearby neighborhoods like Capitol Hill. While Capitol Riverfront has various activity points of high place

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identity communication- as identified in the place identity maps- investing in connector corridors will greatly increase neighborhood connectivity, image and vitality. An example of a connector corridor would be recreating a point of place identity communication at the intersection of L St and 8th street SE. This would increase the possibility of linking the economic activities that exist in the Eastern Market through 8th St to the intersection with L St and down towards M St. Virginia avenue Park also stands as a resource that can be leveraged to increase activity and attraction. While the overhead southeast freeway remains a major element separating Capitol Hill and the Capitol Riverfront Neighborhood, innovative interventions can be employed to make the underpasses more pedestrian friendly in order to serve as a corridor connector.

Figure 5.0 Potential Connector Corridor between Capitol Riverfront and Capitol Hill

Source: Google Maps
In the case of NoMa, the neighborhood is significantly cut off from close by neighborhoods and economic activity centers like the H-street corridor and Union Market. This is mostly due to the presence of the red line, which runs from Union station through NoMa to Rhode Island Avenue. While the proposed new metro station exists for Union station at First street NE and for NoMa Gallaudet-U station at 3rd St NE would increase the connection of NoMa to other neighborhoods and surrounding activity, it is recommended that a connector corridor plan be implemented to further leverage neighboring economic activity. A recommend approach will be to recreate a place identity communication node (Mix of activities) at the intersection of M St NE and 3rd St NE. The existing Uline arena and the proposed metro station exist can be leveraged to ensure future street activity and corridor vibrancy while also better connecting the neighborhood to economic activates in Union Market.

CHAPTER SIX: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the recommendations informed by case study analysis results, this chapter presents general recommendations to be considered in the adoption of the business improvement district model in new urban spaces. The following recommendations highlight important factors that influence place identity development and neighborhoods ability to develop a competitive edge and advantage.

- **Foster Place Identity Co-Creation Through Community Activities:** Community events should be encouraged to foster place identity communication a co-creation. This creates the opportunity for residents to actively participate as not only contributors but also embodiments of place identity. In addition, community spaces such as parks and
sports and recreation centers are important in creating a strong sense of community among community residents.

- **Create A Balanced Mix Of Uses:** A high balance of mix of uses is recommended. This would not only reduce retail leakage but also improve the possibility of presenting residents with a variety of offerings that suite whatever lifestyle they lead.

- **Promote And Inclusive Neighborhood:** While place identity development is a dynamic process, neighborhoods must guard against segregation. This would involve observing evolving neighborhood trends and balancing excesses through interventions as affordable housing, improving access of neighborhood business to loan facilities. Etc.

- **Complete Historic Preservation:** Historic preservation efforts should include designing elements of the built environment that have the potential of achieving the kind of cultural significance worthy of future historic preservation.

- **Ensure connection to other neighborhoods:** Identification of major transportation infrastructure and other barriers separating neighborhoods from other urban areas close by is essential in planning neighborhood connections. This is important as expanding connections to close by economic activities improves the neighborhoods ability to attract urban actors.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

This research has attempted to validate the importance of place identity as an important factor determining competitive advantage of urban areas. Using agglomeration economies to qualify competitive advantage while identifying elements of place identity as community, the built environment and economic activity, this research has been able to identify a positive relationship between place identity and competitive advantage. Through case study analysis of Capital Riverfront and NoMa, this research has identified elements of place identity and how they inform competitive advantage. In recognition of the dynamic nature of place identity and its connection both history and contemporary culture, this research recommends a more advanced personalization of the urban experience and innovative urban design and uses connecting the built and virtual environments as necessary approaches to fostering organic place identity development.
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