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Renewing Spokane: A study of motivating forces behind downtown revitalization projects

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RENEWING SPOKANE: A STUDY OF MOTIVATING
FORCES BEHIND DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION PROJECTS

A Thesis

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Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

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Master of Science

Resource Management

by

Kara Kennedy Mowery

June 2015

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

RENEWING SPOKANE: A STUDY OF MOTIVATING FORCES BEHIND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECTS

by

Kara Kennedy Mowery

June 2015

This study examines the motivating forces behind downtown urban renewal projects through qualitative interview research. Using Spokane, Washington, as a case study, interviews were conducted with key players in downtown revitalization, including public administrators, private developers, and non-profit representatives. While neoliberal theory indicates that economic return serves as the primary motivation for investment, interview questions were designed to uncover whether additional motivating factors stimulate renewal work. Results indicate that those conducting renewal projects are primarily motivated by economics, but additionally cite heritage preservation values and community development as significant factors. Moreover, contemporary renewal projects are found to be small-scale endeavors, undertaken by individual private investors as government involvement has significantly diminished. Revitalizers tended to express frustration with a lack of investor and public awareness regarding renewal opportunities, suggesting that increased information dissemination might promote further renewal work

within mid-sized urban downtowns. Issues with neoliberal policies in addressing contemporary urban issues are also discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this age of neoliberal ideology and policy, urban renewal projects are characterized by private funding and individual investors. Although neoliberalism heralds a piecemeal approach to revitalization schemes, including locally-generated renewal efforts, such as public-private partnerships and business improvement districts (James, 2010; Strom, 2008; Cohen, 2007; Faulk, 2006), its cumulative impact is radically reshaping contemporary downtowns in ways remarkably different from the previous era of Modernist megaprojects of slum clearance and freeway development. As driving forces and styles of renewal have shifted in recent years from modernist to post-modern and neoliberal policies, undoubtedly so have the motivations, challenges, and future desires upon which projects are based.

Much research has been conducted to examine changes in cities as a result of renewal efforts. However, while substantial documentation exists regarding the composition and results of contemporary urban revitalization projects (Gotham, 2001; Bryson, 2013; Mitchell, 2001), little has been done to examine the motivating forces, current conditions, and future aims behind their realization according to revitalizers themselves (Rich, 2012; Faulk, 2006). Additionally, while neoliberal thought is commonly discussed as the standard framework for contemporary revitalization projects, it is important to address its failings in addressing all urban renewal challenges. This research aims to develop a better understanding of urban renewal through an examination

of what causes project implementers to carry out their works, how they describe their experiences, and their desires for the future, as well noting some shortcomings of the neoliberal framework in contemporary revitalization.

Using the City of Spokane, Washington as a case study, this thesis examines recent urban revitalization as witnessed by the agents who plan and carry out the projects directly: private developers, community organizations, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and local government officials (for the purposes of this study, these renewal agents will be referred to as “revitalizers”). In doing so, the following three questions are examined: What motivates revitalizers to conduct renewal projects? What have their experiences been in working in renewal in downtown Spokane? What do they forecast for the future of the area? These questions are answered through examination of semi-structured interviews with revitalizers. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 23 revitalizers in Spokane, Washington in the summer of 2014. The interview sample consisted of city and county officials, private developers and consultants, one local university representative, management staff of the local BID, and individuals from community groups including non-profits supporting heritage preservation and homeless services. Semistructured interviews were utilized in order to uncover and examine the perspectives of the revitalizers, specifically their motivating factors for undertaking projects, challenges faced, goals and desires for the future

Following the completion of all interviews, recordings were transcribed verbatim using MS Word. Transcripts were then coded using a system of letters and numbers,

indicating general topic and specific concept mentioned, for the purpose of inductively determining key concepts discussed in the interviews and drawing out significant themes (Gorden, 1992). Highlighting and underlining of transcripts was additionally conducted to mark noteworthy statements and potential quotes. Due to the small sample size, statistics were not run on the results.

This introduction begins with an exploration of the history of Spokane, Washington from its initial development in the late-19th century through present-day, including urban renewal efforts conducted over time. This chapter also identifies the theoretical construct used to examine revitalizers and their motivations, including a review of Neoliberal theory and the formation of hypotheses based upon well-established concepts of urban renewal. In the second chapter of the thesis, relevant literature is examined in order to situate this research within the broader context of existing knowledge and introduce the academic article which follows. Next, a stand-alone journal article presents the findings of the research. Finally, a brief conclusion is presented.

SPOKANE, WASHINGTON: A CASE STUDY

The city of Spokane is located in eastern Washington State, 20 miles from the Idaho State line and 92 miles south of the Canadian border. With a 2013 population of 210,721, and 535,684 within the metropolitan statistical area, Spokane is the largest city between Seattle and Minneapolis (United States Census Bureau, 2015). As of 2013, eighty-seven percent of residents were white, and mean annual income was reported at

\$42,274 (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Though not a particularly diverse or wealthy city, Spokane serves as the economic and cultural center for most of eastern Washington and north Idaho, and is particularly significant in the region for its numerous universities and hospitals (Wang, 2003).

Early History

Spokane was settled by Euro-Americans in the later part of the 19th century. Prior to the city's founding in 1878, roughly 30,000 native people—members of the greater Columbia Plateau tribes—are believed to have been living in the greater Spokane region (Morrissey, 1997). These tribes, including the Yakimas, Nez Perces, and Coeur d'Alenes, had traditionally lived as migratory groups, with seasonal patterns of movement based on availability of specific resources at various times throughout the year. Initiated with the arrival of Lewis and Clark in 1804-1805, contact with white settlers was further developed through the arrival of both Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the decades that followed. The channels of movement that had been established as part of the fur trade network (firmly instituted in the Pacific Northwest by this time) allowed for the arrival of these groups; missionaries were motivated to move west not only by an interest in religious conversion of the native tribes, but also to assist with populating the greater area in an effort to boost American standing and influence in the region (Stratton, 2005, p. 22).

The United States government promoted settlement of the area through various incentives for any willing to move west. This strengthened its hold on the northwestern

region of the continent at a time when several other nations were also vying for its control, including Britain, Spain, and Russia (Bamonte & Bamonte, 2011). In 1846, their efforts brought notable progress: Great Britain signed a treaty relinquishing its claims, and two years later, Oregon Territory was officially formed by the United States. Two subsequent wars between U. S. forces and local tribes in the late-1840s and 1850s prompted the establishment of reservations for native inhabitants, “initiating a basic policy of geographic segregation of races” (Stratton, 2005, p. 23). Prime areas for industrial and urban development, such as the falls along the Spokane River, were excluded from reservation territories.

Spokane was born late in the progress of western American history, yet quickly attained significant distinction in the Pacific Northwest for two reasons. First, it replaced Walla Walla as the regional capital, becoming the commercial center of the expansive Inland Empire: a geographic area stretching from eastern Washington and northern Idaho, east into Montana, south into Oregon, and even including some southern parts of British Columbia (Morrissey, 1997). Moreover, it became an essential hub of a new regional, and national, railroad network.

The city is situated on an area of falls within the Spokane River originally exploited for its use in powering millwheels (see Figure 1). Despite the ready availability of water power, development of the region was initially slow. The first mill was built on the falls in 1873; the town, first known as “Spokane Falls,” was not platted for another five years (Stratton, 2005). The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1881 did much

network, connecting the region's timber, mining, and agricultural pursuits with the rest of the nation (Fahey, 1994). The fertile farmland of the Palouse to the south, coupled with subsequent mining booms in the region, boosted Spokane Falls' economy and significance as a regional stronghold for commerce and amenities. Additional railroad access to the outlying areas allowed for further opening of the white pine forests of inland northwest, yielding considerable contributions to local wealth (Stratton, 2005).

Boom Town

In 1880, shortly after the town's founding, there were 350 people recorded in the Spokane Falls area by the national census. Ten years later, it was a city of nearly 20,000 inhabitants, and the largest between Minneapolis and the western seaboard. The city nearly doubled in size again by 1900, and in 1910 had reached an astounding population of 104,000. Over the course of these decades, Spokane had taken the county seat from nearby Cheney, and developed the railroad center away from Sprague, in the farming region to the southwest (Stratton, 2005).

It was a booming frontier town on all accounts. At the end of the 1880s, Spokane Falls boasted—in addition to all of its newly-constructed buildings—“thirty-eight fire hydrants, twenty arc lights ‘at principal crossings,’ fifty-two telephone boxes, and a nightly variety show...” (Fahey, 1994, p. 22). During this initial growth period, most of the city was built of wood: referred to by Morrissey (1997) as “instant cities,” Spokane was part of a group of rapidly-growing settlements with “wooden houses, stores, sheds, sidewalks, fences, and poles,” surrounded by wooden “boardinghouses, lunch counters, restaurants, hotels, saddleries, manufacturing establishments, saloons, and other structures jumbled on the land between the river and the railroad tracks” (p. 43). Due to the city's location, on the edge of considerable forestland, wood was an obvious and economical choice of building material. Moreover, piles of lumber for export, stacked to dry and awaiting shipment on the Northern Pacific Railroad, filled blocks of the downtown core (Morrissey, 1997).

Along with the common practice of building with wood came the common disaster faced by so many cities of the time: fire. In 1889, Spokane suffered a conflagration that burnt more than thirty city blocks. An eyewitness from the fire's starting point, carpenter Jacob Klein, recorded,

One Sunday evening, about 7 p.m. on the 4th of August, 1889, I took a lunch in one little restaurant close to the N.P. depot, and the cook spilled some lard on the stove, and the wallpaper back of the stove caught fire. They could have put it out easy but the cook said to let the old shack go, and it went up in smoke, also the one near by. By that time, a breeze came up from the S.W. and within five hours, 31 blocks of the heart of the city went up in smoke. I never saw such a fire in my life as that one. (Morrissey, 1997, p. 43).

Klein's statement is telling of the suddenness with which the fire consumed downtown, and the shocking magnitude of its destruction. All buildings were lost, from the Northern Pacific freight building at the south end, to the river on the north, and from Lincoln Street east to Washington Street. Despite its devastating consequences, the fire laid the groundwork for a rebuilding effort that demonstrated the optimism and passion of Spokane's citizens, and would forever influence the scale and sense of place of the city's core.

Rebuilding for the Future

Following the great fire, emphasis was placed on using building materials such as stone and brick, rather than wood. Following in the footsteps of Seattle leaders, who had

recently passed similar legislation, the lawmakers of Spokane Falls passed an ordinance only a few days after the fire, prohibiting “frame, or wooden, or corrugated iron building of any kind or character” within the city’s fire limits (Morrissey, 1997, p. 51). More than simply preventing future catastrophic blazes, however, the inhabitants of Spokane Falls sought to make for themselves a new urban image (Stratton, 2005). Intense business interests in the area propelled a vigorous rebuilding effort, “focused on the transformation of the city into a regional center” (Morrissey, 1997, p. 44). Their success was notable: an “overwhelming impression of monumental buildings” was noted by a visitor not long after the fire occurred (Fahey, 1994, p. 26). As one of the great railroad centers of the West, and home of the Inland Empire’s newly-rich mining barons and lumber kings, Spokane once boasted a reputation as “one of the best built cities of its size in the United States” (Stratton, 2005; Inland Print Company, 1907, p. 4).

Another change following the fire was the alteration of the city’s name. Following a year of campaigning, municipal lawmakers in 1891 voted to eliminate the word “Falls” from the official title (Morrissey, 1997). This was an official mark of departure from a rural, backwater-type settlement into a sophisticated city of the modern age; Spokane had become an entity of its own, no longer directly dependent upon its natural surroundings to define itself or claim its significance.

The Spokane region fared well in the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s, despite a national depression from 1893-1897. A “modern urban profile of office buildings, banks, department stores, hotels, and other commercial institutions” filled the downtown

area, abutting the South Hill and other wealthy residential districts of elaborate mansions for the region's newly-rich (Stratton, 2005, p. 34). On the west end of downtown, an area originally homesteaded by attorney and contributing city founder J.J. Browne would become one of the most prestigious neighborhoods in the city for wealthy citizens to build their homes (Wang, 2003). Browne's Addition offered views overlooking the Spokane River valley and provided direct access into the city's commercial core. Following the Great Fire, "the city saw an influx of architects versed in current styles and ready to serve the clients who were making their money during the city's first economic boom," and their efforts were most noticeable in the districts west and south of downtown. (Wang, 2003, p. 15). Along with the impressively rebuilt commercial-industrial core and glittering new residential regions, Spokane's inhabitants dressed the city with a strong cultural base of churches, a cathedral, hospitals, orphanages, schools, colleges, and a Jesuit university. In 1903, Theodore Roosevelt stopped in Spokane as part of his two-month journey across 22 states; it was the first visit to the city by a sitting president (Bamonte & Bamonte, 2011).

Spokane's strong growth period lasted until the years around 1910, heavily influenced by the City Beautiful movement advocating for "artistic public buildings, monuments, parks, vistas, treed avenues, and other amenities" (Fahey, 1994, p. 33). By 1905, the city had a fairgrounds and recreation park, home to Spokane's professional baseball team. An electric railroad had been in operation since the end of 1903, serving Spokane and Coeur d'Alene and eventually expanding south to farming hamlets

throughout the Palouse, terminating in Colfax and Moscow (Fahey, 1994). The Gilded Age saw the development of streetcar lines in Spokane; competition between the companies prompted the development of destination spots along the routes to draw ridership. One example of this was Natatorium Park, first designed by the Spokane Cable Railway in 1889 to promote use of its line to a neighboring city addition. It originally featured a baseball diamond, a zoo, and the city's first public swimming pool. Later, amusement facilities fashioned after New York's Coney Island Park were added; outdoor concerts and vaudeville productions were featured, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show gave several performances in the park (Bamonte & Bamonte, 2011).

The relationship of Spokane's residents with the river that had propelled their city's initial development had become markedly altered through the first decades of urban growth. The waterway and its falls, once awe-inspiring to the eyes of the first settlers, had been polluted and ignored to the point of total transformation by the opening years of the 20th century. Spokane's initial founder, James Glover, remarked on his first visit to the river in 1873, "I was enchanted—overwhelmed—with the beauty and grandeur of everything I saw"; half a century later, Wang (2003) notes, "the industrialization of Glover's scenic wonder was accomplished with breathless pride. Much of the gorge below the Falls was backfilled on both north and south banks to accommodate street and rail grades" (p. 43; 46). Moreover, a dam had been constructed in 1890, just upstream from the gorge, for hydroelectric power.

Significant alterations to a city's surrounding environment, however, were largely seen as expected and unremarkable at the time. Such was the regional pride for Spokane during the golden years of growth that contemporary communication of all types made immediately obvious the pride and zeal of inhabitants at the time, heralding the city as a beacon for the region's prosperity and progress. A Spokane Chamber of Commerce pamphlet from 1905 crowed, "Probably no city in the Pacific Northwest is more widely known, by reputation at least, than Spokane, the Imperial City of the Inland Empire" (Morrissey, 1997, p. 133). The phrase 'Inland Empire' was employed widely for public and private uses alike, including railroads, business names, media prints, and correspondence. As noted by Morrissey (1997), "The words...marked a set of ideas, developed over time through negotiations among residents and others who invested their future in this particular place" (p. 146). Even local poetry followed suit; the following piece, composed by Le Roy Benson, was published in *Washington Magazine* in May of 1906:

Spokane, Queen of Inland Empire

T'was not man but Judgement higher,

That chose this beauty spot for thee,

On which to build thy destiny. [...]

And these fair streets with flowers strewn,

Once out of solid rock were hewn,

And now tall buildings skyward rise
In tribute to man's enterprise.

And with the Empire's wealth arrayed,
The steel-shod caravans of trade,
Across the continent are whirled
Into the markets of the world.

Long live they Subjects as they strive
And may the Empire always thrive,
But in my progress bear in mind,
To thee the Master was most kind. (Morrissey, 1997, p. 21)

Demonstrative of the regional pride and confidence in the future which marked the era, Benson's poem illustrated Spokane's place as the vital center of the area and described the region's rapid progress.

Slow Growth in the 20th Century

Spokane's growth would plateau following the rich years around the turn of the 20th century, producing a distinct sense of languor and isolation following the conclusion of its initially dynamic advancements. This stagnation of Spokane's progress was due

largely to its utter dependence on resource extraction from the region's farms, mines, and forests (Stratton, 2005). The reduction in growth was further contributed to by both the Panic of 1910-1911, and the passing away of much of "the generation of men mainly responsible for Spokane's first economic boom" (Wang, 2003, p. 17). Gripping the city through much of the 20th century, limited development kept the city's built environment relatively preserved; a significant stock of historic structures still stand in the downtown area today, dating from the region's growth in the Age of Elegance.

Spokane passed through World Wars in a sleepy manner. While each previous census year since the city's birth had documented significant growth, the 1920 record indicated a gain of just 35 people from ten years prior. As noted by historian Donald Meinig (2005), "there can be no doubt that the pattern of vigorous growth was followed by an abrupt loss of vigor. . . the color, and boundless optimism of 1910 had quickly departed" (p. 35-36). Economic activities based on resource extraction slowed across the country at this time, as forceful pressures from national corporations increasingly bought out local ownership of the mines, smelters, and forests. The focus on rail transit shifted toward the new age of automobiles.

The city emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in a manner typical of many other American cities of the postwar period: dirty, derelict, and deemed 'ugly' by more than a few (Bryson, 2013). American urban planning strategies in these years, influenced by the budding ideas of Modernism, commonly employed revitalization strategies such as the large-scale demolition of unattractive blocks and neighborhoods—often displacing low-

income residents—and “harsh” new designs for novel downtown spaces (Bryson, 2013, p. 496). As planners sought to reinvent commercial cores and slow the middle- and upper-class exodus to the newly-developing suburbs, competition in the form of contemporary roadway systems helped to facilitate long-distance travel. Development of the national interstate highway system brought I-90 through the center of Spokane’s downtown, creating a complex sense of growth and progress while simultaneously cutting an unbridgeable divide through the city’s core, laying further challenges to those seeking to keep downtown from emptying out.

Spokane’s citizens bucked national trends of urban renewal in 1961, however, when they twice voted to reject a joint venture between local and federal government to revitalize the city and help eradicate blight—cited by Rahmani (2005) as a common Spokane trend of “voter apathy and excessive rugged individualism, which has as one of its basic principles a general mistrust towards public spending” (p. 79). Following these setbacks, city leaders hired an urban renewal director by the name of King Cole to conduct research on how to best address Spokane’s situation (Bryson, 2012). It was Cole who ultimately lead the efforts to host a World Expo in order to generate substantial, rapid change in the city’s form and function (Rahmani, 2005).

Changes implemented in preparation for the World’s Fair in the early 1970s were dramatic markers in Spokane’s growth in the 20th century. The metropolitan population was approximately 180,000 in 1974; by this time, it had also developed its nickname as the “Lilac City” (Fahey, 2005, p. 207). City leaders invoked the budding environmental

movement through “urban greening” as an important urban renewal strategy while planning for Expo ’74 (Bryson, 2013). Cultural historian Donald Meinig (2005) notes, “here was a dramatic expression of new environmental concepts. Tearing up the railroads and recovering the river was a symbolic severance from old alignments and attitudes” (p. 41). The impact of the changes made in Spokane’s core was massive. In fact, Fahey (2005) remarks, “the ‘residual’—the transforming impacts upon a host city—was one of the most impressive left by any fair anywhere in the world” (p. 207). Two decades later, in 1994, an article in the *Spokesman-Review* newspaper argued that all subsequent developments in Spokane owed “almost everything to what happened twenty years ago” (Meinig, 2005, p. 81).

Expo ’74 stimulated the development of Spokane’s Riverfront Park, a green centerpiece of downtown with the falls as its centerpiece. The park was built on islands in the river once home to extensive rail yards; trestles from the rail lines, which had for years substantially blocked views of the river, were removed (Youngs, 2005). The fair additionally transformed the city’s business district, sparked the creation of the opera house, spurred the development of improved street lighting, garbage cans, and other infrastructure, and stimulated investment in the region unseen for many years. Moreover, effects of the fair on community and regional participation were widespread: Tom Foley, later speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, recalled his role in securing federal funding for the fair as “one of the most important moments of his political career” (Fahey, 2005, p. 222).

Unfortunately, the significant renewal attempts surrounding Expo '74 did not carry much momentum into the years following, and created significant challenges for today's revitalization efforts. Downtown struggled significantly in the 1980s and 1990s, faced with high vacancy rates, challenges and failures in preserving historic sites and structures, and formidable economic woes; these problems were typical across North America, as downtowns fought to compete with blossoming suburban development (Faulk, 2006). As Bryson (2013) remarks, "even Riverfront Park at times has been threatened with crime, dilapidation, and inadequate funding" (p. 508). Modernist ideology called for erasing much of the historic landscape, to be replaced by emblems of technological progress and forward momentum, including increased parking areas and fresh architectural styles. Ironically, the historic structures once seen as antiquated and obsolete—and therefore, removed with zeal-- have become highly desirable in the era of post-modern, neoliberal renewal.

Based upon this neoliberal ideology, which will be discussed further in the following section, urban renewal in downtown Spokane has gained new footing in the 21st century. The city's contemporary development and planning efforts, influenced by "new urbanist" ideas—including the emphasis of social, economic, and ecological distinctiveness of particular regions—and the successes and failings of the renewal attempts of the 1970s, represent its position on the brink of blooming into a mature modern city (Wang 2003). Jackson and Kuhlken (2006) note how Spokane's "undeniable attractions of scenery and outdoor recreational activity are being combined with a new

sense of responsibility for fashioning a city as a habitable space” (p. 178). Major transportation efforts, such as the north-south freeway (in various stages of planning for 40 years and now finally under construction), proposed “inter-urban” arterial system and high-speed public transit throughout the downtown area, suggest major changes in property values and land use throughout the city and county in coming years (Grimes, 2003).

Critics of Spokane’s revitalization efforts so far note that the projects have largely followed a bland outline of many other urban area renewal attempts, remarking that the city’s planners “seek answers without asking so much as a single question about Spokane’s geography, history, or sense of urbanity” (Rahmani, 2013, p. 91). Moreover, Spokane’s revitalizers have attempted many recent projects which emphasize the promotion of tourism, including the redevelopment of the Davenport Hotel, and the plans to turn the city’s old Masonic center into a heritage tourism destination. Rahmani (2013), quoting Judd, has noted that in areas where urban decay or social issues promote a tourist perception that the city may be inhospitable or even dangerous, the city government (in partnership with tourism entrepreneurs) is forced to construct places where visitors may find suitable facilities and amenities (p. 89).

There remain considerable questions regarding the motivations and intentions of revitalization proponents within Spokane’s downtown. Based on the city’s development history and situation relative to other North American municipalities, it is pertinent at this time to examine what brings investors to this area specifically, what they

are planning for the downtown district, how current projects are progressing, and what investors envision for the future. Bringing together various theories of organic development versus planned interventions, and the promotion of tourism versus emphasizing local community fabric and character, an examination of the current forces at work may serve to uncover the future of Spokane's development as it moves toward becoming a significant metropolitan area in the 21st century. In order to properly position this research, however, it is important to examine the theoretical underpinnings which influence its design.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

This thesis seeks to explore concepts of urban renewal based on a theoretical basis of neoliberalism and its influence. The neoliberal school of thought maintains classic concepts of economic liberalism—John Locke and Adam Smith's designs of individualism and self-interest contributing to overall social wellbeing, upholding that free market forces 'know best' and similarly contribute to the benefit of society—and applies these notions to the contemporary context of institutional frameworks and powers (Brown, 2006). Rather than attempting to explain renewal efforts as symbols of neoliberal economics, however, this research seeks to explore a rather divergent concept: in contemporary urban settings, where economic value is most frequently cited as the basic premise for conducting revitalization work, are there other motivating forces driving revitalizers? This research question is based on the assumption

that, when asked, most individuals and organizations conducting renewal projects will list economic benefit as a primary motivator. This hypothesis is tested alongside an investigation into whether or not additional incentives, such as community development or heritage values, might also play into the rationale for conducting urban renewal projects.

Neoliberalism, within the realms of economic and political theory, represents free-market economic policies which aim to shift procedure and practices away from the public dominion, to be conducted by private enterprises and controlled by market forces. David Harvey (2007), one of the foremost experts on neoliberal thought, defines it thusly: “a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade” (p. 22). A particularly stinging synthesis of the neoliberal school of thought describes that its policies “dismantle welfare states and privatize public services in the North, make wreckage of efforts at democratic sovereignty or economic self-direction in the South, and intensify income disparities everywhere” (Brown, 2006, p. 693). Regardless of its criticisms, however, neoliberal thought has become a dominant force in many realms in the 21st century, including urban planning and renewal practices (Eagle, 2012; Smith, 2002; Weber, 2002).

Scholars point to the era of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan for the birth of neoliberal policies, developing in political-economic policy and practice since the

1970s (Harvey, 2007; Weber, 2002). Unemployment and inflation, concentrated in the economic crises of the time, contributed to significant public protests and campaigning for government and social reforms. It was at this time, Harvey (2007) argues, that ‘ruling classes’ across the globe began to see and feel distinct threats to their political and economic positions. Shifting power back toward the wealthy elite, then, encompassed a direct restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s of political, economic, and even social policy to emphasize business interests rather than social reform, individual rights rather than community concerns, and private enterprises rather than government programs.

New emphasis was placed on citizens as rational actors in every sphere, “individual entrepreneurs and consumers whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for ‘self-care’ ...as welfare recipients, medical patients, consumers of pharmaceuticals, university students, or workers in ephemeral occupations” (Brown, 2006, p. 694). Privatization and outsourcing of various government programs and services, including social services, education, law enforcement, and even the military developed at this time. And government offices and legislators, previously concerned more distinctly with the administration of juridical affairs, became markedly driven by market forces and business concerns.

Neoliberal ideology, the influence of which may be seen at all levels of government in the United States and beyond, “has in effect swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment” (Harvey, 2007, p. 23). Its mark is unmistakable in modern urban policy, ushering in changes such as

“deregulating financial markets, commodifying debt (eg. through mortgage securitization), destroying certain credit shelters for housing, and providing increasing support for real-estate syndications” (Weber, 2002, p. 520). With this wave of change, those concerned with urban renewal have seen a distinct shift away from the government-led, vast-scale revitalization projects, which heralded the triumph of Modernism in the 1950s and 1960s. Gone are the days of Robert-Moses style reform, altering significant chunks of the urban fabric in one fell swoop. Instead, smaller projects, frequently undertaken entirely through private funding or via a new vehicle, public-private partnerships, have taken the lead in urban renewal progress.

Moreover, government officials and offices seeking to develop their jurisdictions as powerful modern players have frequently been seen to cater to the economic interests of private business above any other realm of concern: an example of this, cited by Smith (2002), is the \$900 million taxpayer subsidy given by the City of New York to the New York Stock Exchange, in response to threats that the corporation might relocate across the Hudson River to New Jersey (p. 427). Neoliberal thought, dismissing public ownership of real estate as inefficient and unproductive and promoting redevelopment primarily in parts of the city where private investment is likely and value extraction potential is high, contributes to the privatization of public land holdings, the creation of financial tools such as tax increment financing districts (TIF), and business improvement districts (BIDs) (Weber, 2002).

Public-Private Partnerships

The model of public-private partnerships (PPPs) has been adopted frequently across various levels of government in recent years, to mixed reception and success. Neoliberal urbanism, Smith (2002) writes, “is an integral part of this wider rescaling of functions, activities and relations. It comes with a considerable emphasis on the nexus of production and finance capital...” (p. 435). Public-private partnerships, then, provide “carrots such as tax incentives to ensure the creation of development they want” (Eagle, 2012, p. 63). Most PPP arrangements, functioning as “complex, long-term municipal contracts with private companies for some combination of services, construction, or financing in return for some combination of public funds, public assets, or user fees,” are marketed as collaborative efforts to achieve a public objective (Bloomfield, 2006, p. 400). A successful example of this type of partnership in Washington State is that of Seattle Public Utilities, which entered into a 25-year contract with private enterprises to develop the Tolt Treatment Facility, and operate the plant following its completion in 2001. Reportedly, entering into the PPP has saved the City tens of millions of dollars in capital investment (Seattle Public Utilities, 2015).

Not all PPP ventures have seen such success. Many projects originally promoted as cost-saving arrangements with low risk and high yield have ended up costing taxpayers considerably more than expected, cemented into a long-term agreement (Bloomfield, 2006). While proponents of PPPs argue that they disperse risk across stakeholders, operate efficiently through market-driven competition, and offer

transparency in government-related works, critics note that they frequently burden public coffers with inefficient, long-term contracts that yield disappointing results (Bloomfield, 2006). Furthermore, partnerships between local states and private capital unavoidably mark that urban policy, perhaps previously drawn by a variety of other concerns, must work significantly to “fit itself into the grooves already established by the market in search of the highest returns, either directly or in terms of tax receipts” (Smith, 2002, p. 441). Beyond an assessment of the implications of neoliberal theory and practices ruling contemporary revitalization practices, it is additionally important to note, albeit briefly, a negative consequence which has run hand-in-hand with renewal efforts since their inception.

Gentrification

Despite significant alterations in the practices and policies of revitalization efforts across past decades, one long-standing issue is that they encourage the displacement of poor and minority groups in favor of wealthier factions. Neoliberal urban renewal, in fact, has been cited as evolving “into a vehicle for transforming whole areas into new landscape complexes that pioneer a comprehensive class-inflected urban remake,” turning from the public-housing works of contemporaries of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs to subtler, yet equally as blatant, efforts at relocating those who do not generate significant economic return in favor of those who do (Smith, 2002, p. 443). Issues of gentrification are substantial and complex, and full review of the literature is beyond the scope of this research.

Gentrification continues to serve as the focal point for countless other scholarly efforts (see for example Schill & Nathan, 1983; Brueckner & Rosenthal, 2009; Newman & Wyly, 2006). Issues in downtown revitalization pertaining to gentrification, especially its negative impacts on marginalized people, are absent from the results presented later in this research. The research was designed not to address such issues since they are so heavily focused on elsewhere in the body of academic work. Rather, this work approached the study of revitalization processes from a new angle, by uncovering at the motivations and challenges of the revitalizers themselves as they work in the neoliberal era.

CONCLUSION

In Spokane as in most North American cities, attempts at urban renewal have experienced a distinct evolution since their inception following World War II. First through emerging modernism as epitomized through Spokane's Expo '74 projects, then across the changing schools of thought to recent manifestations of post-Modern/neoliberal thinking embodied in small-scale, piecemeal revitalization works such as the Fox Theater and Steam Plant rehabilitation, revitalization projects have resulted in a wide variety of effects and responses. The complex results, both negative and positive, lay the groundwork for continuing development of the urban fabric, and provide the foundation for an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Modernism, neoliberal practices, and how the two schools of thought might be constructively merged.

In the following chapter, a review of the literature regarding the evolution of North American downtowns, revitalization schemes, and qualitative interview research techniques will be provided. Next, in the journal-ready article, the methodology of this research is explained, including an examination of the interview tool, methods of data analysis, and a discussion of supplemental sources. The article additionally examines the results of the interview research, including a breakdown of the report perceptions of revitalizers by private interests and public representatives; it is additionally explored how local agents factor into the renewal stage in Spokane. Finally, the implications of this research are presented in Chapter Five, with a summary of the results and suggestions as to how those wishing to promote renewal projects may most effectively draw revitalization investment, based on the motivating factors uncovered here.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to situate Spokane's downtown within the greater perspective of urban development, this literature review examines the traditional role of North American downtowns as the focus of the community, as well as the development of suburbanization in the 20th century, and the downtown renaissance beginning in the 1990s. Doing so allows us to establish commonalities between urban commercial cores, as well as the characteristics which make Spokane unique. Moreover, urban revitalization itself is an extensive and highly-studied concept, providing an ample body of literature for review of its influencers, processes, and varied outcomes. Because so much has been written on revitalization, the entire body of literature will not be reviewed here; a summary of overarching theories and more recent contributing ideas, such as neoliberalism's contribution in the form of BIDs and other economic tools, is provided in this chapter. In order to successfully situate the research techniques employed for this study, a review of selected works involving interviews with revitalizers is also included.

NORTH AMERICAN DOWNTOWNS

Spokane's history shares many characteristics with other North American metropolitan areas. Both its early development and the trends it experienced throughout the 20th century were common to cities across the American west. As downtowns grew remarkably in scale and significance throughout the 19th century, most notably in the

decades following the Civil War with the explosion of industrial progress, the urban center developed as the geographical and representative heart of the city (Fogelson, 2001). This held true in Spokane, where the first settlements along the river falls developed into the city's vibrant core, an area essential to all regional activities—particularly due to the presence of rail yards—by the turn of the century. Cities functioned as dense mixes of economic, social, and cultural activities, with downtown serving as the beating heart of the entire metropolis (Vance, 1990). In Spokane, the presence of the rail yards and streetcar lines in the downtown meant that all comings and goings, from the very rich to the very poor, encompassing all social and ethnic backgrounds, would find their center there.

Downtowns played a variety of roles within city activities. As employment, retail and service centers, downtowns were part of the daily lives of nearly all urban inhabitants (Ward, 1966). When Spokane rebuilt in haste following the 1889 fire, it was not just warehouses and offices that they erected in brick and stone, but also department stores, specialty shops, and restaurants. The emerging retail and entertainment opportunities of the city's center drew residents to the district in ways no other city quarter could. By the close of the 19th century, the city's form was marked by concentrated business activities within the dense urban core, surrounded by residential areas—largely for poor and ethnic groups who couldn't afford to live further from the industrial and commercial areas—finally ringed by the neighborhoods of the middle and upper classes concentrated along developing transportation lines (Lloyd, 1981). Spokane's elite lived largely on the

southern and western sides of town, providing easy access to downtown while staying far from unpleasant sights and smells of downtown's commerce and industry.

Early Suburbanization

Following the continued intensification of American downtowns into the early 20th century, the same advances which had made commercial cores so vital eventually contributed to their decline in the middle of the century; busy, dense urban areas, while offering essential business and commerce opportunities, had clearly become unappealing places to live and recreate for anyone who could afford to live elsewhere (Fogelson, 2001). Streetcar and electric railroad lines sprung up throughout Spokane, reaching outlying residential areas, as well as popular leisure sites such as Coeur d'Alene. These advancements in transportation distinctly altered the urban fabric of many cities, rendering them dramatically different than anything seen even a few decades before (Warner, 1962). Freed from the constraints of pedestrian-based mobility, city dwellers in Spokane and elsewhere increasingly zoned and divided the city, expanding suburban development as it became possible to live much further from the city center.

While some efforts to improve downtown conditions in order to curb flight from the city center were developed at this time, cleaning and rehabilitating dense commercial cores was much more difficult than focusing efforts on development in the popular new suburbs (Wells, 2014). When the Olmsted Brothers visited Spokane in the early 20th century, they urged the removal of downtown rail yards for the beauty and functionality of the urban core, something which wouldn't occur for many decades. Deteriorating

environmental conditions of city life continued to develop from large-scale factories, and “inadequate infrastructures and services were overwhelmed with vastly increased amounts of human-generated waste” (Archer, 2013, p. 55). In Spokane, neighborhoods sprung up away from the commercial center, and streetcar lines which lead to more pleasant locales, particularly parks, were highly popular.

Downtowns, it has been argued, were the product of a temporary societal environment which called for their existence. As noted by Garreau (1991), “these old downtowns were highly aberrational. We built those huge, acutely concentrated centers for fewer than a hundred years” (p. 105). Northwestern cities such as Spokane did experience a notable rise and subsequent fall for their downtowns as essential centers which drew the activities of nearly all citizens. However, another argument forwarded maintains that cities and their suburban developments rise and fall together: as cities become more robust, so must their supportive outlying areas (Rapaport, 2005).

Further Suburbanization

Gaining its start from transportation developments such as streetcars and paved roads, suburbanization further burgeoned out of the rising popularity of personal automobiles and improvements in national roadway systems following World War II (Jackson, 1987). This nationwide evolution distinctly colored Spokane’s growth, as it experienced notable geographic expansion of its boundaries (though not its population); while downtown vacancy rates soared, development at the edges was robust, even for a city growing slowly (Bryson, 2013). Barren, crumbling downtowns became

commonplace across the American landscape, as businesses and services followed suburban growth and commercial cores became devoid of many of their previous activities; a self-reinforcing cycle emerged as more city dwellers pursued an escape from the unattractive situations of city cores (Jacobs, 1961). In Spokane, city lines pushed out miles from the central district as housing and associated services spread far from the core. Declining central business districts, the flight of the middle and upper classes to suburban areas, and the spread of slums and blight came to characterize American downtowns throughout the post-WWII era (Jenkins, 2001). In Spokane as well, the downtown became relatively dirty and derelict in the decline following its glory years of the early 20th century

Renaissance

Following this marked decline in downtown activity due to the burgeoning suburbs across North America, traces of a renaissance in the urban core are found beginning in the 1990s. This shift in downtown's fortunes has resulted in increased residential rates within urban downtowns to the extent that demands for related amenities, such as retail, schools, and parks, have also notably grown (Birch, 2009). New housing and shopping opportunities in Spokane and elsewhere have taken off since the development of a comprehensive plan focused on renewal in the last 1990s. Faulk (2006) offered an eight-stage model on downtown development, including first its rise as a commercial-retail-government center, the following decline in surrounding residential areas, subsequent decline in retail and commercial space, emerging high level of

vacancies and abandonment, and then organization for redevelopment. Spokane's downtown has followed a similar trajectory, and its renaissance revolves around a marked group of organizers participating with the city government to identify goals for rehabilitating the central core.

Research on central economic and political forces in urban downtowns showed that traditional corporate stakeholders, once heavily invested in strategies to reinvigorate downtowns during their decline, have largely moved their presence elsewhere in recent years (Strom, 2008). As a result, the urban downtown renaissance occurs within a landscape vastly different than seen before; Spokane's downtown streets, once filled with warehouses and large-scale department stores, are more recently characterized by smaller shops and restaurants. Much contemporary focus for downtowns rests on leisure activities for drawing residents into the core, emphasizing amenities such as shopping and convention centers, as well as sports facilities (Johnson, Glover, & Stewart, 2014). The Spokane Arena, Convention Center, and River Park Square shopping complex have all been developed in recent decades in order to bolster activity downtown. Central business districts today compete with the new centers of suburban areas, where city dwellers may also be drawn for their leisure activities (Wood, 1988). As Spokane's downtown experiences its recent renaissance, shopping and recreation opportunities around the city's peripheries continue to ensure competition for business.

REVITALIZATION SCHEMES

Following the decline of downtowns in the mid-20th century, urban revitalization efforts have undergone a distinct evolution. Two distinct ideologies of revitalization have been observed: Modernism, and post-Modern neoliberalism. In addition to exploring these two principal schools of thought which have governed renewal efforts across the continent, the economic incentives and benefits which play such a key role in Neoliberal ideology merit specific examination for the dictating role they play in contemporary revitalization schemes. Lastly, an observation of the roles of planners and government across the two general eras of renewal provides an important piece in telling a more complete story of urban revitalization in North America.

Modernity: Slum Clearance

Modernist revitalization dealt with large-scale public projects, such as the development of interstate freeways and block-size redevelopment schemes (Jacobs, 1961). Downtown Spokane's significant parking garages from this era, and the demolition of many of its century-old warehouses and commercial facilities at the same time, are all demonstrative of Modernism. Simultaneous to broad changes across the landscape, Modernist ideas significantly threatened the low-income and other marginalized populations, ironically endangering certain subcultures as it frequently sought to establish high-brow, well-to-do cultural institutions in their place (Zipp, 2009). For instance, the demolition of older buildings in order to remove blight and make way

for fresh structures and parking lots often subsequently removed housing opportunities for poor residents of Spokane's downtown.

In general, Modernist urban planning and downtown renewal attempts in the postwar era sought to keep middle- and upper-class citizens living, working, and recreating in the downtown core (Cohen, 2007). In Spokane, these efforts were exemplified through the revitalization efforts in preparation to host the 1974 World's Fair. Operating under the premise of environmental reform and promising that the fair would stimulate continued redevelopment and enhance downtown diversity, city planners effectively removed low-income residents from the downtown area and made improvements to the waterfront area in preparation for the event, as well as improving services and amenities such as streetlights and garbage cans (Bryson, 2013).

The Post-Modern/Neoliberal Movement

While the foundational elements of the post-Modern Neoliberal school were discussed in detail in the first chapter of this thesis, it is relevant at this point to include an examination of some of the defining manifestations of the ideology as have been implemented in renewal projects across North America. Developments such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and business improvement districts (BIDs) serve as emblems of the wave of thinking which emerged in reaction to the trends of Modernism, as well as the political, economic, and social environments of the late-20th century. James (2010), citing Hackworth and Moriah, noted three "common contentions of Neoliberal ideology" relevant to urban planning and social policy: the individual as the 'normative

center of society’; the free market as the superior force for individual autonomy; and the ‘interventionist state’ as the ‘chief impediment’ to an individual independence and self-sufficiency (p. 75).

Downtown stakeholders, maintaining a focus on neoliberal ideology in recent years, have been found to engender seven common strategies in contemporary renewal efforts: pedestrianization, indoor shopping centers, historic preservation, waterfront development, office development, special activity generators such as trade shows and conventions, and transportation enhancement (Robertson, 1995). Examples of all of these may be found in Spokane, including the development and expansion of the convention center, the redevelopment of the River Park Square shopping center, and marked historic preservation efforts by the local non-profit advocacy group. Moreover, successful renewal environments have been found to demonstrate a self-promoting cycle of investment and diversification, contributing to downtown vitality and popularity (Levy, 2013); Spokane’s BID and its managing body, the Downtown Spokane Partnership, work to establish this type of environment. BIDs serve as a prime example of neoliberal revitalization: they are reflective of a recent focus on “incremental, entrepreneurial” renewal efforts, as opposed to the large-scale projects which had come before (Mitchell, 2001, p. 115). Additionally, Main Street organizations, affiliated with the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, are provided with the four-point framework of organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring as guidelines for their individual renewal efforts (Robertson, 2002). Spokane, partnered with

the Main Street Alliance of Washington, participates in this kind of renewal strategy as well.

Economic Incentives and Benefits

A major tenet of the Neoliberal urban renewal movement has been demonstrated as the move to bring private capital back into the central business district (Zipp 2013, Steinmann 2013). Reform efforts aimed at real estate interests—borne out of earlier slum and blight clearance projects, and nurtured through the realization that downtown properties could once again fetch high dollars—have completely redesigned large swaths of central urban areas. Zipp (2013), writing on the shifting focus of urban renewal projects, found that the “ethic of city rebuilding” developed throughout the 20th century was formed on both ridding the inner-city of undesirable spaces and residents, but also a focus on restoring property values to create continued economic incentive for investing in urban downtowns. This framework may be seen in Spokane, where upscale restaurants, shops, and residential spaces have been the focus of most recent renewal projects. A focus on elevating property values is frequently coupled with an interest in using retail as a key player in renewal schemes: retail-commercial opportunities make downtown regions more desirable to downtown residents, as well as any regional residents or visitors to the municipality (Steinmann, 2013).

Moreover, organic or loosely-planned developments of entertainment opportunities in urban downtowns have been found to yield considerable economic and social benefits to those zones (Camp & Ryan, 2008). Spokane’s music venues, wine bars,

and other recent downtown arrivals which were not necessarily part of a specific renewal plan nonetheless appear to significantly contribute to downtown vitality and sense of place. Additionally, it has been found that historic preservation may prove financially lucrative to those interested in urban renewal, though the matter remains under academic debate (Faulk, 2006; Ryberg-Webster & Kinahan, 2013). As previously noted, Spokane hosts an active preservation advocacy community.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The last body of literature requiring review for this project is that of methodologies implemented to collect the data provided in the journal article. Perhaps most similar in methods and topics is Rich's (2012) study in Scranton, Pennsylvania. It involved interviewing thirty business owners, city and nonprofit administrators, and cultural leaders to ascertain motivation factors for key players in revitalization projects. This study employed similar methods of qualitative interviews, with a comparable group of small-city revitalizers, in order to determine what motivations revitalizers empirically cite for their work. However, while much of the methodology employed in this study is modeled after that of Rich, there are significant theoretical differences between the two: while Rich employs Richard Florida's creative class theory to explore manifestations of renewal within Scranton, this study seeks to understand revitalization motivations and conditions based on neoliberal ideology.

Aside from Rich's (2012) work, a handful of other projects have been conducted along similar lines. Prior and Blessi (2012) conducted eight in-depth interviews with professionals involved in regeneration processes in Sydney, Australia, to examine the connections between social capital, community ties, and culture-led renewal processes. The study focused on a single site for renewal—the Sydney Olympic Park—and relied heavily upon “professional reports” generated over a 17-year period of renewal processes, making it markedly different from the work conducted here.

In addition to these two studies, which focused on case studies at specific locations, urban renewal processes have also been studied through focuses on particular processes and techniques. The development of business improvement districts (BIDs) has been examined through interviews with BID managers, public and private service providers, and government officials (Hoyt, 2006). Moreover, regeneration professionals, local residents, and academics in the United Kingdom were interviewed together for a study examining concepts of well-being and participation in urban regeneration (Woolrich & Sixsmith, 2013). Siikamaki and Wernstedt (2008) conducted interviews with project-level stakeholders, both public and private, through snowball sampling techniques in order to determine factors influencing success in efforts to convert urban brownfields (contaminated properties) into greenspaces. Lastly, purchasers of condos in a gentrifying Montreal neighborhood in the 1990s were sampled and interviewed to establish attitudes surrounding social and class diversity, and social and affordable housing (Rose, 2004).

While revitalization processes have been examined through stakeholder interviews utilizing a range of methods, and sometimes through case studies similar to this one, only Rich's study has targeted a similar group of revitalizers and conducted semi-structured interviews to ascertain motivating factors and current conditions. Additionally, while Rich's (2012) study is the most similar in its use of revitalizer interviews and focus on a single municipality, it was based on testing a selection of social theories, while this proposed study does not attempt to apply such a structure. Therefore, a notable gap in the literature stands to be filled by this study.

CHAPTER III
JOURNAL ARTICLE

RENEWING SPOKANE: A STUDY OF MOTIVATING FORCES BEHIND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the motivating forces behind downtown urban renewal projects through qualitative interview research. Using Spokane, Washington, as a case study, interviews were conducted with key players in downtown revitalization, including public administrators, private developers, and non-profit representatives. While neoliberal theory indicates that economic return serves as the primary motivation for investment, interview questions were designed to uncover whether additional motivating factors stimulate renewal work. Results indicate that those conducting renewal projects are primarily motivated by economics, but additionally cite heritage preservation values and community development as significant factors. Moreover, contemporary renewal projects are found to be small-scale endeavors, undertaken by individual private investors as government involvement has significantly diminished. Revitalizers tended to express frustration with a lack of investor and public awareness regarding renewal opportunities, suggesting that increased information dissemination might promote further renewal work within mid-sized urban downtowns. Issues with neoliberal policies in addressing contemporary urban issues are also discussed.

Revitalization schemes have, in recent decades, altered the core of many North American cities in a manner marked by piecemeal approaches and small, independent projects (Mitchell, 2001). Emblematic of the rise of neoliberal policies characterized by a reliance on market forces and the reduction of government projects, most modern renewal is driven by private funding and individual investors, yielding impacts on urban downtowns markedly different than that of mid-20th century Federal megaprojects. Modernism, with its roots in the New Deal projects of the Depression era and featuring large-scale government works, evolved across the decades toward post-Modernist and

neoliberal tendencies with a reduced role for government and renewal driven by market forces. The 21st century has seen the rise of smaller, more locally-generated renewal efforts, including public-private partnerships and business improvement districts (James, 2010; Strom, 2008; Cohen, 2007; Faulk, 2006). As driving forces of renewal have shifted from large public works to smaller, privately-based investment, revitalization projects have demonstrated a distinct and compelling progression (Levy, 2013; Robertson, 2002).

Much research has been conducted to examine changes in cities as a result of renewal efforts (Teaford, 2000; Gratz & Mintz, 1998; Katz, 1994; McGovern, 1999). However, while substantial documentation exists regarding the composition and results of contemporary urban revitalization projects (MacDonald, 1996; Barnett, 1995; Jennings, 2011; Gotham, 2001), little has been done to examine the motivating forces, current conditions, and desires for the future of the downtown according to revitalizers themselves. This research aims to develop a clearer picture of urban renewal through an examination of what causes project implementers to carry out their works, and how they describe their experiences. Beyond an interest in accumulating private wealth, are there other causes that stimulate revitalizers to conduct their projects?

This article examines recent urban revitalization efforts through a case study of Spokane, Washington, to explore the motivation(s) behind urban renewal according to the agents who plan and carry out the projects directly: private developers, community organizations, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and local government

officials (for the purposes of this study, all renewal agents will be referred to as “revitalizers”). In addition, characteristics of the current renewal environment and goals of renewal work are explored. The following questions are examined: What motivates revitalizers to conduct renewal projects? What have their experiences been in working in renewal in downtown Spokane? What do they forecast for the future of the area? These questions are answered through examination of 24 semi-structured interviews with revitalizers conducted in the summer of 2014 and evaluated through coding of interview transcripts and statistical analysis.

The findings of this study illustrate the revitalization process as described by the revitalizers themselves working within the neoliberal framework. Spokane is an ideal case study with its modernist Expo development in the 1970s and contemporary focus on private development and Public Private Partnerships, demonstrating a trajectory of renewal that parallels many other North American cities, from New York City to Chicago and Reno (Mitchell, 2001; Steinmann, 2009). Following the large-scale Modernist revitalization efforts of the late-20th century, renewal is now largely conducted by small private actors on a piecemeal basis. This study adds to the literature on urban revitalization by examining motivating forces for city renewal according to revitalizers themselves and additionally examines, as a case study, a city without significant previous research.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, an overview of North American downtown development is presented, followed by an examination of revitalization schemes

implemented to curb downtown decay. Next, the theoretical framework of the research is explored. The subsequent section provides the sources and methods of obtaining data, followed by an exploration of the results. Finally, a discussion of the implications of the study, and a conclusion, are presented.

DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH AMERICAN DOWNTOWNS

Spokane's history, while having distinctive physical, social, and economic conditions, shares many characteristics with other North American cities. Though its early development is most analogous to that of similar cities and towns specifically of the American west, the trends it experienced throughout the 20th century were common across a much broader spectrum. Following a wave of explosive growth in the 1880s (punctuated by a devastating fire in 1889 which prompted significant rebuilding in brick and stone), Spokane's downtown, as characteristic of the time, was the base of all economic, political, and social activity within the city (Meinig, 2005). Prior to significant revolutions in transportation and communication, North American urban dwellers were bound to the city's core in order to conduct nearly all of their business (Warner, 1962). This produced dense, busy downtowns, marked by the diverse activities of daily life (Jackson, 1987).

Following dramatic technological advancements in the mid-20th century, a wave of changes permanently altered city form and function across the continent (Fogelson, 2001). Though streetcars had allowed for some suburban development and

compartmentalization of city districts around the turn of the century, it was the explosion of automobile ownership following World War II, which most dramatically prompted changes in city structure (Jackson, 1987). Single-family homes, particularly in areas beyond the city's dense core, sprung up in frenzy. Improved roadways, interstate highways, and easily-accessible parking areas were constructed en masse to meet the exploding demand (Fogelson, 2001). In Spokane, blocks of aging industrial buildings within the commercial core were razed to make way for parking lots and garages, while Interstate 90 was built directly through the downtown, forever separating it from the wealthy homes and hospital district of the South Hill (Bryson, 2013).

It was during this era that attention turned, for the first time in North America, to the developing problems which accompanied suburban growth and the changing functions of urban downtowns (James, 2010; Zipp, 2009). As city dwellers increasingly noticed, the largely-white upper class flight from city cores out to polished new residential areas rendered city cores derelict homes to the poor and disadvantaged. The growth in automobile-based infrastructure made the urban pedestrian experience much less desirable, or even impossible (Jacobs, 1961). Shopping and other services gradually disappeared from the downtown. Cities, once a diverse mix throughout the landscape, were now rigidly divided into districts, rendering places like the commercial core relatively empty and lifeless after the close of the business day. This would also be the fate of Spokane's downtown during this time (Bryson, 2013).

Revitalization in Response to Downtown Decline

In response to the increasing ills associated with changing city form, efforts aimed at downtown renewal began to develop across North America in the 1960s and 1970s (James, 2010; Zipp, 2009). Initially, urban planning and revitalization projects typically dealt with large-scale housing projects, spawning in large part from the creation of the Federal Housing Administration, which had occurred in 1934, and later development of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1965 (Whittemore, 2012; Swanstrom, 2015). Extensive demolition, slum clearance, and the construction of significant public works such as housing projects and civic centers, were the emblems of Modern revitalization. In Spokane, these efforts were largely a result of preparation for the World's Fair, which the city would host in 1974 (Bryson, 2013). Here, Modern renewal took the form of "pervasive urban cleansing and riverfront beautification" (Bryson, 2013, p. 500). Clearing the city of blight, landscaping the boulevards, and establishing residential districts were all projects aimed at bringing the city into the Modern image of success, preparing it for a place on the world stage. This renewal type experienced a marked and dramatic rise and fall across North America; after sweeping across the continent and remaining prevalent for several decades, Modernism was deemed a failure in the last decades of the 20th century, and quickly fell out of popularity. Its weaknesses and shortcomings paved the way for the reactive rise of neoliberal thought at the turn of the 21st century (Cohen, 2007; Avila & Rose, 2009).

Based on an emphasis of individualism and market forces, neoliberal thought emerged following the decline of Modernism, yielding equally-as-important results for the scope and impact of North American urban revitalization (Faulk 2006; Strom, 2008). Developments such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and business improvement districts (BIDs) served as emblems of the new wave of thinking, marked by a rejection of the former ‘interventionist state’ which had prompted so many publically-funded works (James, 2010). Maintaining its hold since its development in the 1980s, neoliberal revitalization is largely aimed at bringing private capital back into the commercial core of the city, in the form of Main Street Partnering, ‘economic empowerment zones,’ and other similar schemes (Jennings, 2011; Zipp, 2013; Steinmann, 2013).

In Spokane, neoliberal practices took initial form in the Downtown Spokane Partnership (DSP), developed in the 1990s and is contracted by the city to manage its BID; much of the remainder of downtown renewal is conducted by small private players on a piecemeal basis. Projects are undertaken one-by-one, building-by-building, based on independent efforts to restore buildings or construct new in the commercial core. The rise of neoliberal policies and practices within urban renewal schemes marked a large-scale shift in revitalization work, principally dissimilar to that which had been conducted previously – especially in the 1970s in preparation for the Expo when downtown received new parking garages, pedestrian bridges, and the redevelopment of former industrial yards in to the park area that would house the pavilions. In the following section, the

underlying framework of this theoretical basis is explored within the context of urban renewal.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As neoliberal policies dominate the contemporary urban renewal environment across North America, this work seeks to explore the conditions within its framework as described by the revitalizers themselves. It aims to uncover the forces which motivate today's revitalizers to conduct their work in the age of PPPs, BIDs, and other neoliberal strategies, in addition to how they describe the current conditions of renewal work, as well as their goals for revitalization (Weber, 2002). Private investment, generated through the various tools of neoliberal revitalization work such as reliance on market forces and a reduction of government involvement, has proven key to contemporary renewal strategies; the use of renewal instruments such as BIDs has been described as reflective of a recent focus on "incremental, entrepreneurial" renewal efforts, as opposed to the large-scale projects which had come before (Mitchell, 2001, p. 115). Moreover, recent research has characterized the attention to small-scale partnerships and plans, implemented by independently-minded revitalizers, as "new" downtown revitalization (Mitchell, 2001).

However, despite the surge in popular use of neoliberal strategies in downtown revitalization across North America, neoliberalism remains an ideology widely disputed in its forms and successes; the roles it establishes even for government regulation and

intervention remain under debate (Brenner & Theodore, 2005). Its critics have additionally presented neoliberalism as a strategy to restore class dominance for those who lost their standing in the social restructuring following WWII (Harvey, 2007). It has been further attacked for devaluing “political liberty, equality, substantive citizenship, and the rule of law in favor of governance according to market criteria” (Brown, 2006, p. 690). While the theories of neoliberal revitalization continue to demonstrate marked influence on the urban scene, questions of other ideologies and motivations which drive renewal actors must also be asked and addressed.

Using Spokane as a case study, this research focuses on asking revitalizers themselves about the impetus for their work, the current conditions they describe, and what they expect for the future of the city. Based on concepts of neoliberal ideology, including the dominance of market forces and elimination of government interference, it was expected that economic return would serve as the primary motivating factor for the majority of revitalizers interviewed. However, interview questions were structured specifically to ask about motivations beyond economics, such as community development or heritage preservation values which have additionally been noted in renewal literature (Ryberg-Webster & Kinahan, 2014; Woolrych & Sixsmith, 2013). Interview questions were developed based on the hypothesis that revitalizers, particularly those in a medium-sized city such as Spokane, would indeed be motivated by concepts of community boosterism and historic preservation, in addition to financial gain. This research not only contributes significantly to an understanding of the effects of neoliberal

principles on contemporary society, but also adds to the body of knowledge concerning today's urban revitalization work and its motivating forces in terms of what stimulates present-day renewal projects. Moreover, some of the issues within contemporary revitalization work, prompted by the neoliberal framework within which renewal actors currently function, are explored.

SOURCES AND METHODS

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 23 revitalizers in Spokane, Washington in the summer of 2014. The interview sample consisted of city and county officials, private developers and consultants, one local university representative, management staff of the local BID, and individuals from community groups including non-profits supporting heritage preservation and homeless services, and included sixteen men and seven women. Revitalizers interviewed were selected due to active involvement with renewal projects in downtown Spokane; all core categories of players involved with downtown revitalization efforts, between public and private interests, were targeted. A purposive sample allowed for the selection of participants within each identified categories to group the revitalizers, though it utilizes a non-representative subset of revitalization stakeholders (Bernard 2006). The contact list was generated based on revitalizer association with significant organizations, reputation as a notable player in downtown renewal projects, or referred by word-of-mouth recommendations from those contacted during initial outreach. Limitations existed due to the unavailability or

disinterest of certain revitalizers; approximately half of those contacted were willing and able to participate in an interview.

Semistructured interviews were utilized in order to uncover and examine the perspectives of the revitalizers, specifically their motivating factors for undertaking projects, challenges faced, goals and desires for the future. This method provided interviewees a basic structure within each interview session, but also allowed for open-ended questioning, facilitating discussion of topics and issues not particularly mentioned in the scripted questions. This method followed Rich (2012) in Scranton, Pennsylvania, who employed semistructured interviews to compile views of the revitalization process according to the outlook of some of its key agents. Interviewees were asked to sign an informed consent form based on the approved criteria of the Human Subjects Review Committee at Central Washington University, which included permission to record the interviews.

Interviews lasted on average for thirty minutes, and were conducted either in the revitalizer's place of business or a nearby public meeting space. A standard list of twenty-five open-ended questions was asked, divided into three categories: incentives for conducting renewal work in the downtown area, current opportunities and challenges experienced, and projections for the future of Spokane's downtown. For example, revitalizers were asked what factors were taken into consideration when they decided to work in downtown Spokane, how they would describe the contemporary revitalization atmosphere in downtown Spokane, and what they would like to see happen in downtown

Spokane in the future. Interviewees were permitted to discuss any issues of interest in addition to the script of standard questions, and were allowed to skip transcript questions at their discretion.

Following the completion of all interviews, recordings were transcribed verbatim using MS Word. Transcripts were then coded using a system of letters and numbers, indicating general topic and specific concept mentioned, for the purpose of inductively determining key concepts discussed in the interviews and drawing out significant themes (Gorden, 1992). Highlighting and underlining of transcripts was additionally conducted to mark noteworthy statements and potential quotes. Once coded, tables were used to tally the number of responses for each motivation or desire (see tables 1, 2, and 3). Due to the small sample size, statistics were not run on the results.

RESULTS

Economics and Other Motivating Factors

For the first segment of the semi-structured interviews, revitalizers were asked about the driving forces motivating their work. When initially presented with an open-ended question about why they chose to work downtown, respondents presented no clear patterns; responses ranged from cost of living (in Spokane compared to elsewhere), to convenience for job location, a general interest in being near the civic center, and the draw of historic buildings. However, when asked in subsequent questions about specific motivating factors —economics, heritage values, and community and civic pride—

interviewees largely responded positively to each. Again, no significant difference was exhibited between the groups of revitalizers – developers, government agents, non-profit representatives, consultants, tourism organizations, and the academic representative— regarding the motivating forces they discussed. Of the twenty-four interviewees, seventeen responded positively to at least two of the three anticipated motivating factors, and eleven cited all three (see table 1).

Economics was anticipated to be the most significant motivating factor (Weber, 2002; Faulk, 2006; Zipp, 2013), and proved to be the most frequently cited cause for revitalizers interviewed: of the 24 respondents, 19 cited economic return as a primary factor. The two other specifically-named factors were also positively identified by the majority of participants: 16 revitalizers cited civic/community pride, and 14 discussed heritage/historic preservation values.

Additionally, 19 participants cited other motivating factors beyond those anticipated: personal interest in revitalization or preservation ($n = 8$), professional responsibility ($n = 7$), promoting sense of place ($n = 5$), promoting tourism ($n = 2$), encouraging new residents to move to Spokane ($n = 1$), and the ‘fun’ of working on building projects ($n = 1$).

While there was no notable difference between motivating factors cited amongst the groups of revitalizers interviewed, there were some differences in the manner in which the primarily cited factor, economic return, was discussed. Those representing private business interests (the seven developers) were more

Stated Motivating Forces for Revitalization

	Economics	Heritage values/Historic Preservation	Civic/ community pride	Other
Developers (n = 7)	7	5	6	6
Non-Profits (n= 4)	3	3	3	3
Academic Group (n = 1)	1	0	1	1
Consultants- Urban design (n= 3)	2	2	2	3
Tourism Organization (n= 2)	2	2	2	2
City/County Gov't (n= 7)	4	2	2	4
Total Responses (n= 23)	18	13	14	18

likely to mention economic return throughout their interview—as many as seven times in one interview—and refer to economics using such phrases as “bottom line” and “long-term investment.” When asked whether or not he perceived a sense of common goals among revitalizers, one developer responded: “In the broadest sense: that everyone wants to make money.” The other types of revitalizers, including local government representatives, urban design consultants, and non-profit organizations, sometimes did not cite economics at all in the interviews except when prompted with specific questions. Others mentioned it only once during their session, and were more likely to use language

such as “demonstrated vitality” and “sustainable [economic] development” when discussing the issue. When a landscape architect and urban design consultant was asked the same question as above, regarding perceptions of common goals in revitalization, he responded: “A community goal is present: everyone wants to see a more vibrant downtown that is an economic engine.”

In interviews with the seven private developers, economics was presented by interviewees as the paramount cause for choosing to conduct revitalization work. Other motivations, such as heritage values and civic pride, were additionally present in nearly all cases, but it was the subject of economics that was discussed most frequently, and with greatest emphasis. The other two primary factors, and any others discussed, fell below financial motivation when it came to justifying and appreciating renewal projects. For some, concepts of preservation and community pride were not stated as priority concerns at all. Low risk and high payoff were key concepts discussed, as well as increasing difficulties related to diminishing incentives and stricter regulations related to low-income housing and historic preservation requirements.

Economics as primary motivation confirms previous work by Zipp (2013), who found that even the earliest forms of urban renewal were driven by an interest in economic growth in the downtown region, originally spurred by real estate investors and urban planners looking to bring private capital back into the city center. The concept of financial gain as a primary motivator was additionally noted by Weber (2002), who found that, as federal renewal schemes fell away in recent decades, revitalizers became

increasingly motivated in making “costly redevelopment projects ‘pay for themselves’” (p. 537). Regardless of other motivations, it is clear that economics are key to any downtown revitalization project in contemporary times. As stated by one developer, “Economics of a project are paramount. You can’t do things that don’t make sense; in the long run, you have to make investments for which there is economic return, otherwise you won’t be making investments very long. At the end of the day, every project needs to have an economic foundation.” Demonstrative of the necessity of economic return despite any additional motivating factors, this statement underscores how financial return not only incentivizes investors to conduct renewal work, but also carries the obvious benefit of allowing them to continue on to additional projects.

The other groups of revitalizers (non-profit advocates, design consultants, promotional organizations, local government representatives, and the academic representative) also frequently discussed economics as a motivating factor, but it was far from the most important for many interviewees within these groups. Community development, civic pride, and an interest in heritage preservation were equally as important for these participants, and were discussed equally or more often than financial motivation. For these participants, an interest in downtown livability and vibrancy was expressed as key to their goals for renewal projects. Using language which frequently targeted concepts of community, safety, and attractiveness for leisure activities, non-developer participants discussed enhancing sense of place and making downtown a 24-hour zone, attractive as a place to live, work, and play. Commenting on the various

focuses for renewal projects within downtown Spokane, the former City/County Historic Preservation Officer (2008-2014) noted, “For some people, it’s money: an economic venture. I’ve also had the pleasure of working with people for whom it was a project of the heart...and I do have to admit that those people are tremendously rewarding to work for.” This statement illustrates that, despite the clear need for nearly all businesspeople to experience financial return on their investments (in order to remain in business), the sense of community pride and local dedication engendered by certain revitalizers evokes a sense of gratification and pleasure perhaps less common in projects where these factors are absent. Regardless of the motivating factors present, however, all revitalizers noted problems present in the environment of renewal work.

Identified Problems

Participants were asked a variety of questions regarding the nature of conducting revitalization work within downtown Spokane. This included having revitalizers describe the downtown renewal atmosphere within the city, whether or not they perceived a sense of common goals behind revitalization projects and what challenges they have faced thus far in conducting their renewal work in this location. It was anticipated that revitalizers were likely to identify a number of specific challenges to revitalization efforts, based on preliminary research regarding renewal projects across North America, and in Spokane specifically (Robertson, 1995; Fogelson, 2001; Birch, 2009; Hallenberg, 2014; Spitzer, 2014), and the context of downtown Spokane itself. These categories were further refined as transcript coding took place, and were pinpointed as five specific issues: negative

public opinion or lack of public awareness, issues with local government restrictions or bureaucratic process, lack of investor awareness or negative perceptions, perceived lack of safety or security downtown, and a fragmented revitalization process that prevented cohesive efforts.

Again, there were no notable differences in responses provided between groups of revitalizers (see table 2). At least half of participants cited public opinion ($n = 18$), government and bureaucracy ($n = 19$); investor opinion ($n = 18$); and a fragmented revitalization process (or lack of common goals between revitalization efforts) ($n = 13$) as challenges. Additionally, nine discussed security issues hampering renewal attempts, including perceptions of areas being unlit or otherwise unsafe, and the presence of loiterers around the downtown region. In particular, revitalizers from all groups mentioned incidents where downtown itinerants and loiterers have bothered downtown visitors and residents, both simply by their presence in the core as well as the occasional event where they have heckled or otherwise harassed others.

Beyond the five main concepts discussed as challenges to urban revitalization in downtown Spokane, revitalizers cited the following issues: lack of incentives and/or lack of investor awareness of them ($n=4$); the challenges of rehabilitating old buildings ($n=2$); poor economic conditions ($n=2$); lack of formal gateways into the downtown region

Challenges to Revitalization, as Perceived by Revitalizers

	Public opinion/ awareness	Bureaucratic problems	Investor awareness/ attitudes	Security	Fragmented revitalization process
Developers (n= 7)	3	6	4	2	3
Non-Profits (n= 4)	4	4	4	2	4
Academic Group (n= 1)	1	1	1	1	0
Consultants- Urban design (n= 3)	3	3	3	0	2
Promotional Organization (n= 2)	2	1	1	2	1
City/County Gov't (n= 7)	5	4	5	2	3
Total Responses (n= 23)	17	18	17	9	13

(n = 2); financing for revitalization projects (n = 2); lack of knowledge of historic preservation aims and techniques (n = 1); disinterest of non-resident building owners (n = 1); lack of way-finding signage downtown (n = 1); and the Washington State Constitution preventing the use of tax-increment financing (n=2). Though participants expressed frustration with the challenges they face, optimism also came through in the interviews, with many citing improving conditions and finding solutions to the present problems. For example, while advocates of historic preservation commonly expressed dissatisfaction with public and investor perceptions—primarily related to misunderstandings regarding the economic benefits and potential regulations of preservation projects—they also all

noted progress in education and awareness within the community regarding the benefits of preservation. As one advocate put it, “I’ve always said that preservationists were seen as speed bumps by developers,” but he continued on to pinpoint how this atmosphere has changed in recent years, pointing to the increasing numbers of investors in Spokane who have been purchasing historic downtown buildings and rehabilitating them. Another preservationist remarked, “There’s our message in action. It’s no longer theoretical: what we talk about is being practiced...and we can say, there’s no way [prominent developers] would get involved with a project if it didn’t pencil out.” Moreover, improved perceptions were also forecasted by one of the city’s most well-known developers, who, when asked about what would change downtown in the next five years, responded, “I think there will be continued optimism from the investment community, to bring money downtown to do projects.”

Among the various hurdles identified by revitalizers in conducting their work in downtown Spokane, one of the most commonly discussed was public opinion. This corresponds with findings from Leinberger (2005), who noted how crucial public opinion can be to the success or failure of renewal projects: “There are many skeptics that will never see the point of bringing back an obsolete, forsaken downtown and give it little if no chance of succeeding” (p. 4). Many of Spokane’s interviewed revitalizers expressed frustration with public opinions which seemed outdated or erroneous. In particular, respondents complained that many people saw downtown as dark, empty, and devoid of secure areas. Typical of many North American metropolitan areas, public opinion and

revitalizer perception demonstrated significant differences (Loures, 2015); recent research suggests that local media outlets contribute significantly to public opinions of the dangerousness of urban areas (Yanich, 2004).

Perceptions of downtown as unsafe were frequently disputed by the revitalizers during their interviews, as they pointed to improvements such as the increase in evening activities in recent years, making it less of a nine-to-five type atmosphere. Revitalizers frequently argued that, if the public would explore downtown more, they would find a greater sense of security than commonly believed. The issue of loiterers hanging around the city's core was also frequently discussed by revitalizers as a challenge requiring immediate attention by the City, though few had any practical solutions to offer for the problem.

Public perception was also presented as a challenge by revitalizers when it came to generating local interest in the renewal and preservation efforts taking place in the downtown area. Spokaneites, revitalizers argued, do not seem to be particularly interested in preserving downtown buildings or dedicating resources toward costly renewal improvements unless they can be convinced of a personal connection to the project. As stated by a representative of Spokane Preservation Advocates: "You can't just say, in a vacuum, that this building matters—unless it speaks to people. It has to tie into people's histories, or collective history, for it to maintain a sense of place." Many of Spokane's inhabitants, revitalizers noted, do not necessarily support preservation for preservation's

sake: they rally behind preservation projects only when personal connections, such as relatives having worked on the building's construction, can be made.

The same seemed to be true for revitalizers when discussing other kinds of renewal works requiring public resources: Spokane's voters, interviewees argued, are not fond of change and typically do not favor increases in government spending. They frequently vote down projects several times, until a dire need becomes apparent. These findings—that the general populous must feel directly connected to projects in order to support them and that convincing a skeptical public is frequently challenging—confirm that of Orr & West (2002), who wrote that “a sense of collective ownership and a sense of inclusion” (p. 418) were essential to generating approval and enthusiasm toward renewal projects from ordinary citizens.

Issues at the bureaucratic level also prompted a great deal of discussion from interview participants. In particular, several revitalizers revealed dissatisfaction with the City's processes for working with renewal projects, especially those projects pursuing non-traditional formats. A revitalizer leading the Kendall Yards project, a mixed-use development on the north bank of the Spokane River, offered lengthy explanations of the inadequacy of the City government in dealing with a development that did not adhere to traditional planning characteristics: “There's...a regulatory culture within the City that is very suburban. You kind of have to remember that the City consists of 600 people that, for the last 30 years, have spent all of their time doing suburban kinds of things.” This revitalizer reported that, after presenting the City with his plan to use small trash cans

outside of each business instead of the traditional dumpster, Waste Management and other City planning representatives responded with significant opposition to the concept. According to the traditional City-level planning of the past several decades, businesses must have parking lots and dumpsters. This outdated concept of city design and planning, frequently identified by interviewees, causes inefficiencies within the urban core and yields frustration for those who attempt new, alternative approaches within the downtown.

Beyond struggles in convincing the public and local bureaucrats to support revitalization projects, many interview participants cited investor opinion as a significant hurdle in working within downtown Spokane. Interview participants frequently noted difficulties in securing funding for renewal projects, a problem with long-standing recognition confirmed by Porter (1995) studies of inner-city revitalization work, and Kotval, Mullin, and Karamchandini (2008) in their exploration of 1990s renewal projects in the American northeast. One of the most well-known developers in Spokane's contemporary revitalization scene discussed in his interview frequent challenges in receiving loans:

I've had to rely on lenders who were willing to say, 'look at his track record and what he's done. This will be successful. Do it anyway.' And I don't get discouraged by the 'no's.' In 1990, when I did a little building in Peaceful Valley...every single bank in Spokane turned that loan down. Nine of them.

Revitalizers expressed concern regarding investors' lack of information on a variety of issues, including renewal opportunities in downtown Spokane, financial incentives, and heritage preservation guidelines and advantages. Many stated a desire to have successful renewal projects receive more public recognition, so that the general population could become more aware of what was being done, and what success these projects had achieved. As noted by one developer in Spokane, introducing people to urban revitalization projects is all about "painting the vision": "We are trying to get people to understand the opportunities. For many people, it's visual: they need the right mix of enough people doing something at the same time, coordinating the start." Despite the problems associated with renewal projects in downtown Spokane, all revitalizers additionally expressed positive aspirations and a sense of optimism for the future.

Desires for the Future

The third category of questions asked during the interviews focused on desires for the future of downtown Spokane. In answering the open-ended inquiry, "What would you like to see happen in downtown in the future?" eight notable topics were mentioned by revitalizers: increased housing; increased 24-hour activity; improvements to Riverfront Park; increased historic preservation efforts; increased investment interest; security improvements; fewer parking lots; and tying together the various regions of downtown (see table 3). In addition to these common responses, other desires mentioned by revitalizers included: a downtown grocery store, improved public transit, improved pedestrian experience, increased density, increased mixed-use spaces, gateway

improvements, way-finding signage, taller buildings, high-rise apartment buildings framing Riverfront Park, and tax revisions to encourage revitalization efforts.

Revitalizer Desires for the Future

	Housing	Increased activity (24-hour zone)	Riverfront Park improvements	Historic preservation efforts	Increased investment interest	Other
Developers (n= 7)	2	0	3	3	4	6
Non-Profits (n= 4)	3	1	0	3	1	1
Academic Group (n= 1)	0	1	0	0	0	2
Consultants-Urban design (n= 3)	2	3	1	1	0	4
Promotional Organization (n= 2)	0	1	1	0	1	2
City/County Gov't (n= 7)	5	3	2	0	2	5
Collective Responses (n= 23)	12	9	6	7	8	19

Participants interviewed frequently demonstrated an optimistic attitude about the direction of revitalization efforts in downtown Spokane. When asked about their perceptions of the future of downtown, participants commonly expressed optimism regarding their personal goals for the future of the area, the likelihood of those goals being achieved, and the positive impact anticipated. In some cases, optimism for the future was based upon building from previous successes:

“...going from where we were fifteen years ago to where we are today, I think it’s been an amazing transformation.” -Private developer

“We’re not all singing Kumbaya together, but there’s certainly a degree of...agreement that didn’t exist ten to fifteen years ago.” -Preservation Advocate

“We’ve come so far in the last ten years, and I think we’re just going to continue to move in that direction.” -Landscape Architect/Urban Design Consultant

Moreover, interviewees repeatedly included upbeat language in their responses, including, “There’s a lot of opportunity here,” “I think that it’s all possible,” and, “The glass is definitely half full.” As a general sense, most revitalizers interviewed indicated that Spokane’s downtown had strong potential for renewal and growth in the future, and that they expected positive renewal developments.

Despite a clear sense of independence between most revitalizers and their projects, there were common threads drawn between the goals presented during the interviews. Housing was the clearest goal communicated, with twelve revitalizers discussing it specifically. This goal, concurrent with a primary tenet of the increasingly-popular New Urbanism movement, is commonplace among revitalizers seeking urban infill and an increased residential presence in the urban core (Larsen, 2005). It goes hand-in-hand with the second most common goal stated by revitalizers, that of increased 24-hour activity within downtown Spokane. Other goals cited by revitalizers included tying together the various districts of downtown and its surrounds, and improving downtown security, both which additionally fall under the umbrella of New Urbanism and find common grounds with revitalization schemes across North America (Mitchell, 2001; Faulk, 2006). Increased heritage preservation efforts represented an additional goal stated by revitalizers ($n=7$). Supporting research by Shipley & Snyder (2013), who found that designated preservation zones were boons to economic development and the Business Improvement Area of a Canadian city, many revitalizers indicated their belief that preservation efforts would contribute to the overall vitality of downtown Spokane.

DISCUSSION

Current Nature of Revitalization

Many revitalizers interviewed characterized Spokane's revitalization atmosphere as one of independently-minded actors, working alone on mostly small projects. Though some did indicate a loose sense of common goals among renewal agents—that all parties involved wish to see downtown prosper economically, and thrive as a healthy urban core—most respondents noted that revitalizers are not motivated by any particular shared agenda. As a result, projects are conducted independently, without a strong common theme or coordinated approach.

This piecemeal approach of revitalization is indicative of a contemporary renewal process which developed following the initial Modernist movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Large-scale federal projects, once seen as shining beacons for the future of North America's cities, came to be seen as failures (Tochterman, 2012; Gotham, 2001). Agencies such as the Federal Housing Administration, and legislation including the Federal Aid Highway Act, which had once acted as prominent and publically-popular figures in downtown renewal, gave their places up as federal funding shifted away from superblock projects and other attempts to alter large swaths of municipal cores in the name of revitalization. Public-private partnerships emerged as the times changed in favor of neoliberal policies, and renewal was placed in the hands of BIDs and private investors.

Spokane serves as a prime example of this shift: in the first stages of renewal, it was the scene of considerable large-scale revitalization work (primarily in the late 1960s

and early 1970s, in preparation for Expo '74) including the development of a considerable downtown park, demolishing numerous city blocks of old industrial buildings in favor of new parking lots and garages, and the construction of Interstate 90 through downtown. Later, following a depression in the 1980s, renewal work was taken up again with zeal in the 1990s; this time, it was in the hands of the BID, the Downtown Spokane Partnership, and a collection of private developers including the Coles Family, Walt Worthy, and Ron Wells. With private interests conducting the majority of renewal work within downtown Spokane, the finding that economics serves as most revitalizers' primary motivating factor is contextually confirmed. Private interests generally operate with the aim to generate financial return, while public interests may be more motivated by community enhancement or other types of services, based on government funding.

Neoliberal ideology, which has come to govern the revitalization atmosphere of the early 21st century, is clearly focused on private, individual efforts for funding and management of renewal projects. Despite overcoming some of the issues of large-scale public revitalization of the modernist era, neoliberalism presents its own problems for the renewal community, notably issues apparent in the piecemeal approach. Neoliberal policies have failed to address issues which require collective effort, such as the improvement of public spaces; interviews in Spokane demonstrated that improvements to River Front Park, the downtown's primary green space, were desired by a number of revitalizers, but this type of project requires public management and funding. Many other issues exist which may require cooperative approaches, including security improvements

and the increased dissemination of information to investors and the public regarding revitalization opportunities and benefits. Both of these topics were frequently cited by interviewed revitalizers in Spokane.

In addition to largely representing private interests, most of downtown Spokane's revitalizers are locally-based agents. Of the 23 revitalizers interviewed, all revealed ties to the area beyond their renewal projects which caused them to live and work in the region. They are local citizens, already rooted in the community, rather than outsiders looking for opportunity. Many had family or had grown up in the area, or had moved to the area for other types of jobs. In response to a question regarding whether or not they had considered other metropolitan areas for their work, interviewees largely indicated that they had not. Thus, the development community in Spokane is small and tight and regionally-based with little in the way of outside ideas coming in. This type of environment, with few novel external concepts being brought to the area, can face challenges in the way of creativity and innovation. But more importantly, there are issues with competing visions, as many revitalizers present strong passions and opinions, rooted in long-standing ties to the local area.

Finding a Common Vision

Responses indicate that Spokane's revitalizers see most of the renewal work taking place independently; while most of the agents at work are familiar with each other, they do not indicate that they coordinate their projects, or work toward a generally-understood goal or theme for the downtown region. Most of Spokane's renewal projects

are small, undertaken one-at-a-time, and often coordinated without much regard for the concurrent activities of other revitalizers. This leads to competition between revitalization projects seeking the same objectives; when plans for the 700-room convention center hotel were recently announced, it forced the Kendall Yards project—the mixed-use development on the north banks of the river—to abandon any hope of establishing its own hotel. According to one of the project's leaders, no major hotel corporation was interested any longer in investing in a downtown Spokane hotel after the market had become so saturated. While competition between revitalizers may produce originality and innovation in renewal projects, eventually leading to a more fully developed and diverse downtown landscape, it can also disable and destroy projects and efforts which might have positively contributed to the downtown atmosphere.

The absence of a common vision among revitalizers also comes into play when addressing the issue of heritage preservation. Spokane has a relatively large downtown area for a city of its size, with many turn-of-the-century, brick and stone buildings still standing from reconstruction following the 1889 fire. A local heritage preservation effort, headed by the non-profit Spokane Preservation Advocates, works to bolster support for rehabilitation and utilization of these historical structures. With most contemporary renewal efforts being conducted by private developers, preservation advocates face a significant challenge in educating revitalizers on the advantages of and opportunities within preserving old buildings. As noted by one of the non-profit's staff members,

“Sometimes you have to fight against close-minded people who see only one avenue for progress, and see it as ‘tear down the old building, build something new.’”

Another advocate characterized the traditional conditions it thusly: “I’ve always said that preservationists were seen as speed bumps by developers.”

Over time, however, it seems that progress has been documented in terms of the awareness and appreciation for preservation. One of Spokane Preservation Advocates’ previous presidents remarked, “With so much previous success...others are seeing that adaptive reuse can be good business.” Preservation advocates also noted progress in education and awareness within the community regarding the benefits of preservation. As the renewal atmosphere in Spokane has intensified in recent years, developers seem to realize increasingly the economic advantages of historical buildings, with recent research upholding this concept (PlaceEconomics, 2011; Mason, 2005). This has been exemplified in Spokane with preservation on historical properties including the well-known Fox Theater and Davenport Hotel, as well as lesser-known projects such as the San Marco Apartment Building and the Jensen-Byrd Building, a historical warehouse owned by Washington State University, which recently received a great deal of media coverage for the disputes concerning its future.

A common vision for downtown renewal is found, however, in the marked trend of economic return driving most, if not all, revitalization work currently conducted. Whether public representatives or private developers, revitalizers seek financial gain in the projects they perform. While they are secondarily motivated by concepts of heritage

preservation and community development, the common thread of all renewal is the search for economic return. With this as a clear mandate, proponents of renewal work within downtown Spokane may use this knowledge to focus support and interest in future projects. Proving economic viability appears to be a basic requirement for drawing awareness to potential ventures, and in many cases, may be all that is required to prompt revitalizers to move forward. Therefore, for solving problems such as lack of investor interest or a deficit of common vision, renewal advocates must highlight the economic opportunities of downtown Spokane to help solve these problems. By broadcasting the financial viability of preservation projects, or the potential economic return of pulling several renewal projects together in order to create unified districts, for example, investors are likely to be drawn to such projects as long as the positive economics can be clearly demonstrated.

CONCLUSION

This research contributes significantly to our understanding of neoliberal practices of urban renewal, highlighting both its successes and failures. Spokane, like many mid-sized North American cities, finds itself in the midst of various downtown urban renewal projects at the start of the 21st century. Following a history of booming commercial center in the early 1900s, a marked decline following WWII as the suburbs grew, and then embarking upon initial renewal work in the Modernist age as it prepared for Expo '74, Spokane's downtown has experienced a range of conditions since its inception roughly

150 years ago. Now firmly entrenched in the neoliberal era, renewal works are found to be conducted by small, private players, often through the frameworks of PPPs or the work of the DSP, managing Spokane's BID. Many positive elements have developed for the urban core from the revitalization paradigm scheme shift to neoliberalism, including competition and increased economic viability. However, issues regarding coordination of renewal endeavors, and resources to address collective problems, have also emerged. Ultimately, it appears that a marriage of neoliberal thought—in the form of independent investors primarily working piece-by-piece on small projects—and some aspects of Modernist thought, such as the need for government works to update and renew infrastructure and other costly, large-scale projects, would produce the most desirable and successful environment for revitalization in this modern age.

Despite the implementation of popular neoliberal strategies within Spokane's downtown and elsewhere, the question demanding attention remains, what else motivates downtown revitalizers beyond an interest in financial gain? Popular theory underscores concepts of market forces driving significant projects in today's world (Harvey, 2007; Weber, 2002). However, this research provides some clues as to other stimuli which prompt revitalizers in urban downtowns to carry out their projects, beyond pure pursuit of economic return. Small players, locally-based and with roots in the community, do indeed cite economics as their primary motivator in conducting renewal work. This was true within all revitalizer types (private developers, local government representatives, urban design consultants, non-profit organizations, and an academic institution).

However, beyond this concern, other forces remain important in driving revitalization projects.

Both heritage preservation values and an interest in community development serve important roles in motivating revitalizers (both public and private) to undertake downtown renewal projects. Because most revitalizers within Spokane have historic or familial ties to the city, the urban core serves not just as a stage of work, but also part of their home community. In interviews, revitalizers frequently cite downtown as a place they enjoy pursuing leisure activities, and as source of citizen pride. Many of Spokane's revitalizers interviewed did not seek out renewal projects because it was part of their main career; rather, they described finding opportunities to improve their home downtown, and which they enjoyed taking part in so that they might additionally reap the benefits of a healthier city in which to live.

Revitalizers described numerous challenges to downtown renewal, including lack of information or clear misinformation among the public and potential investors, bureaucratic hurdles, public perceptions of downtown as unsafe, and a fragmented revitalization process due to many independent actors at work. The latter, a product of many small players conducting projects on a piecemeal basis, exists in an environment largely devoid of common goals for revitalization of the downtown area. Despite these challenges, revitalizers frequently expressed optimism regarding downtown and its renewal schemes.

In forecasting the future of downtown, revitalizers cited various goals and desires for change. There were no distinct trends between the various groups of revitalizers interviewed, indicating the commonality of the future goals identified, including greater housing availability and increasing 24-hour activity in the city's core. Revitalizers additionally expressed interest in encouraging investor activity in downtown renewal projects, an indication of the contemporary state of downtown revitalization based on private investment, markedly different from the renewal climate of a few decades prior.

Today's urban revitalization projects, in contrast to the Modern age of the 1960s and 1970s, are steered by private investment. They are small projects, undertaken piece-by-piece across the downtown landscape. Lacking serious common goals or cohesion, today's downtowns experience renewal like that of a puzzle being pieced together; problems requiring collective effort are difficult to address within this environment. Mid-sized cities interested in encouraging renewal work must attend to the private investors who primarily hold the reins to funding, in addition to resolving urban issues which cannot be addressed by individual private parties. No longer subject to great deposits of public monies and megaprojects vastly redefining downtown spaces, North American cities must look to private players and market forces to understand how renewal is motivated, and how to develop cohesion for remedying large-scale public issues. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that economics do not provide the sole motivation for renewal. Particularly in mid-sized cities, revitalizers frequently have personal ties to the city in which they are conducting their projects. Therefore, tying renewal work into

community improvement and heritage preservation provides additional motivation, and may encourage further investment in urban downtowns.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Spokane, like many mid-sized North American cities, finds itself in the midst of various downtown urban renewal projects at the start of the 21st century. Following a history of a booming commercial center in the early 1900s, a marked decline following WWII as the suburbs grew, and then embarking upon initial renewal work in the Modernist age as it prepared for Expo '74, Spokane's downtown has experienced a range of conditions since its inception roughly 150 years ago. Now firmly entrenched in the neoliberal era, renewal projects are found to be conducted by small, private players, often through the frameworks of public-private partnerships or the work of the Downtown Spokane Partnership, managing Spokane's business improvement district. Many positive elements have developed for the urban core from the revitalization paradigm scheme shift to neoliberalism, including competition and increased economic viability; however, issues regarding coordination of renewal endeavors, and resources to address collective problems, have also emerged. This research demonstrates that a unification of both neoliberal and Modernist policies is necessary to answer all of the issues and needs of contemporary downtown revitalization.

Today's urban revitalization projects, in contrast to the Modern age of the 1960s and 1970s, are steered by private investment. They are small projects, undertaken piece-by-piece across the downtown landscape—confirming the findings of previous research (James, 2010; Strom, 2008; Cohen, 2007; Faulk, 2006). Lacking serious common goals

or cohesion, today's downtowns experience renewal like that of a puzzle being pieced together; problems requiring collective effort are difficult to address within this environment. Mid-sized cities interested in encouraging renewal work must attend to the private investors who primarily hold the reins to funding, in addition to resolving urban issues which cannot be addressed by individual private parties. No longer subject to great deposits of public monies and megaprojects vastly redefining downtown spaces, North American cities must look to private players and market forces to understand how renewal is motivated, and how to develop cohesion for remedying large-scale public issues. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that economics do not provide the sole motivation for renewal. Particularly in mid-sized cities, revitalizers frequently have personal ties to the city in which they are conducting their projects. Therefore, tying renewal work into community improvement and heritage preservation provides additional motivation, and may encourage further investment in urban downtowns.

Despite the implementation of popular neoliberal strategies within Spokane's downtown and elsewhere, the question demanding attention remains- what else motivates downtown revitalizers beyond an interest in financial gain? Popular theory underscores concepts of market forces driving significant projects in today's world (Eagle, 2012; Weber, 2002; Smith, 2002). However, this research provides some clues as to other stimuli which prompt revitalizers in urban downtowns to carry out their projects, beyond pure pursuit of economic return. Small players, locally-based and with roots in the community, do indeed cite economics as their primary motivator in conducting renewal

work. This was true within all revitalizer types (private developers, local government representatives, urban design consultants, non-profit organizations, and an academic institution). However, beyond economic concern, other forces remain important in driving revitalization projects and ought to receive attention from those seeking to promote urban renewal projects.

Both heritage preservation values and an interest in community development serve important roles in motivating revitalizers (both public and private) to undertake downtown renewal projects. Because most revitalizers within Spokane have historic or familial ties to the city, the urban core serves not just as a stage of work, but also part of their home community. In interviews, revitalizers frequently cite downtown as a place they enjoy pursuing leisure activities, and as source of citizen pride. Many of Spokane's revitalizers interviewed did not seek out renewal projects because it was part of their main career; rather, they described finding opportunities to improve their home downtown, and which they enjoyed taking part in so that they might additionally reap the benefits of a healthier city in which to live. The significance of local agents as driving forces in revitalization, particularly in mid-sized regional primate cities such as Spokane, cannot be overemphasized: it is to these stakeholders that those promoting downtown renewal must appeal.

Revitalizers described numerous challenges to downtown renewal, including lack of information or misinformation among the public and potential investors, bureaucratic hurdles, public perceptions of downtown as unsafe, and a fragmented revitalization

process due to many independent actors at work. The latter, a product of many small players conducting projects on a piecemeal basis, exists in an environment largely devoid of common goals for revitalization of the downtown area. This void stands to be filled by innovative policy which synthesizes the strengths of both the Modern and neoliberal eras: integrating government involvement and independent renewal agents in order to achieve overall renewal success, involving large-scale public projects along with many small, independent works. Revitalizers frequently expressed optimism regarding downtown and its renewal schemes, but highlighted the need for an over-arching, cohesive effort to organize downtown stakeholders.

In forecasting the future of downtown, revitalizers cited various goals and desires for change. There were no distinct trends between the various groups of revitalizers interviewed, indicating the commonality of the future goals identified, including greater housing availability and increasing 24-hour activity in the city's core. Revitalizers additionally expressed interest in encouraging investor activity in downtown renewal projects, an indication of the contemporary state of downtown revitalization based on private investment, markedly different from the renewal climate of a few decades prior.

The findings of this study present important implications for planning officials who wish to stimulate revitalization activities within their municipalities, particularly those similar to the case study presented. Spokane is a somewhat small city, and serves as the rather remote capital of a sizable region. It is clear that revitalizers conducting their work in this type of environment are local agents with various ties to the region: they do

not come to these types of settings solely to flush out renewal opportunities. Therefore, planning officials need to communicate with and appeal to individuals and organizations already present within the greater community. Additionally, it was determined through interviews with Spokane's revitalizers that disseminating information on revitalization project successes, and future opportunities, is highly important in encouraging continued investment and support for renewal within urban cores.

This study also yields important findings for resource managers who wish to promote certain conservation or preservation activities within and around urban settings. In terms of historic preservation, a clear finding of the Spokane revitalizer interviews is that education and public information are essential in bringing communities in line with preservation values. Preservation advocates frequently expressed frustration with the misinformation held by many community members; they articulated clear desires to educate the public regarding the economic, social, and cultural benefits of preserving historic structures and landscapes. Moreover, those who wish to preserve open spaces surrounding municipalities and curb suburban growth also find their goals parallel to those of urban revitalizers, for a strong and vibrant urban core draws the community inward and may promote less growth around the edges.

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is the need to incorporate concepts of both Modern and neoliberal urban renewal in the design and implementation of revitalization strategies. Each system struggles with unique failures: Modernism, by relying on large-scale government works, fails to leave room for smaller, more creative

projects. Neoliberalism, on the other hand, relies on the efforts of independent investors seeking financial gain; it fails to recognize the need for collaborative, large-scale projects, many of which must be conducted with government resources, such as infrastructure and traffic planning. A marriage of these two systems allows for small-scale, innovative projects to take place across the downtown landscape, while simultaneously recognizing the need for some government involvement in order to provide certain necessary services and stimulate large-scale revitalization work. Additionally, government incentives such as preservation incentives are an integral part of contemporary revitalization stages, where projects may ultimately prove financially rewarding but require a large sum of initial capital investment. Neoliberal practices, fully reliant upon independent revitalizers to conduct renewal projects within metropolitan downtowns, fail to adequately provide for all of the revitalization needs of urban cores. Modernist policy, operating fundamentally through oversized, comprehensive projects to alter substantial swaths of the downtown landscape at a time, also fails when employed as the singular renewal strategy. Policymakers and other stakeholders must work to incorporate Modernist ideas, utilizing government resources for large-scale projects, in collaboration with a neoliberal system of smaller, private works to properly stimulate downtown renewal in the 21st century, and avoid the failures proven within each method when employed independently.

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