The Neighborhood Main Street Initiative in the Barrio: Commercial Revitalization in the Fruitvale District, Oakland, California

by

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, School of Architecture and Planning in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In May of 1996, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council (a community development corporation based in Oakland, California) was one of six CDCs selected to participate in the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (NMSI)—a commercial district revitalization project sponsored by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center (NMSC). The NMSI is a $3 million, four year demonstration project that will help six CDCs to implement the National Main Street Program ("Main Street") in distressed inner city neighborhoods.

The overarching goal of the NMSI is to develop a comprehensive revitalization strategy using the Four-Point Approach of the "Main Street" program: (1) economic restructuring; (2) marketing/promotion; (3) organization; and (4) design/physical infrastructure. This strategy has been successful in economically stable, homogeneous communities, but it has had limited exposure to low-income and ethnically diverse urban neighborhoods. The 1996 initiative is the first ever attempt to give CDCs the opportunity to transfer the program to the inner-city.

This thesis takes a close look at the question of transferability of the NMSI from traditional "Main Street" settings to inner city neighborhoods, and examines the extent to which the Main Street Program can succeed in distressed urban areas in the case of the Fruitvale district in Oakland, California. The study specifically examines the local conditions which negatively impact the Fruitvale Commercial District and focuses on the problems which lie at the heart of inner city revitalization: crime, disorder and public safety. In the process, this thesis describes how the NMSI has thus far proven ineffective at addressing such challenges. This study also provides the Spanish Speaking Unity Council with recommendations to make the district more secure and thus to address the shortcomings of the NMSI program as it applies to the Fruitvale.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables and Maps

List of Figures

Introduction

The physical and social deterioration of inner cities is one of the most obvious problems in America. These problems are quite visible in the forms of high crime rates, drug use and dealing, deteriorating shopping districts, and dilapidated housing stock. Policy efforts have increasingly focused on revitalizing the inner city by improving the economic conditions in these areas. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has also recognized the importance of "commercial revitalization" as a key component to "neighborhood revitalization." A 1996 HUD report notes, "redevelopment of commercial districts promotes economic growth through job creation and small business development..." (see U.S. HUD 1996: 8). Other economic gains include increased access to goods and services, an expanding tax base and private investment. Commercial revitalization can also enhance a community's image through physical infrastructure improvements such as rehabilitation and adaptive uses of existing buildings, refurbishment of facades, and utilization of vacant or abandoned areas.

This thesis examines the National Main Street Program (NMSP) — a comprehensive commercial revitalization strategy with extensive experience in economically stable, homogeneous, small cities and towns. In 1996, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center (NMSC), two national organizations with extensive experience in community building, joined forces to create the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (NMSI). The NMSI is a $3 million, four year demonstration project that will help six non-profit, community-based development corporations (CDCs) to implement the NMSP. The goal of the NMSI is to restore and develop the economic potential of commercial districts in troubled urban neighborhoods. The 1996 NMSI is the first ever attempt to give CDCs the opportunity to use the "Main Street" Program in their communities.

This thesis is not a definitive analysis of the NMSI; rather, it examines the extent to which the "Main Street" Program can succeed in distressed urban commercial districts.

This thesis takes a close look at the question of transferability from traditional "Main Street" settings to inner city neighborhoods and examines local conditions in the case of the Fruitvale Commercial District in Oakland, California. This thesis is presented as a client-based report for the Spanish Speaking Unity Council (SSUC) — one of the six CDCs participating in the NMSI. This study focuses on the problems which lie at the heart of revitalization in the Fruitvale District : crime, disorder and public safety.

The NMSI in the Fruitvale Commercial District

In the Spring of 1996, the Spanish Speaking Unity (SSUC), a nonprofit, community development corporation, was selected to operate the NMSI in the Fruitvale Commercial District. In August of 1996, the SSUC hired a "Main Street" project manager to implement the Main Streets Initiative which is currently in its early stages.

It is important to note that in the NMSI has operated in the Fruitvale District for less than a year and efforts to improve conditions are still developing. Perhaps the most notable improvement in the district is due to the facade improvement program, which started shortly before to the NMSI. It is funded at $200,000 through Community Development Block Grant funds to address storefront improvements along the commercial corridor (see before and after photos in Appendix A). The fact that the NMSI is in its early stages limits the extent to which the various elements of the initiative can be examined.

In its application to the Main Street Program, the SSUC stated six key objectives:

1. **Build on the existing organizational capacity of the community.** The Unity Council will work in cooperation with other community organizations including the Union of Latino Merchants of Oakland/Union de Comerciantes Latino de Oakland (U.C.L.O.), the Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce of Oakland/La Camera de Comercio de Oakland, and the Fruitvale Merchants Association. Together, these groups will work to form a sustaining revitalization effort.

2. **Build a Competitive Regional Identity.** The Fruitvale district has a unique character with distinctive architectural buildings and culturally diverse buildings. The Unity Council's Main Street program will identify market opportunities to

promote the Fruitvale district.

3. **Develop a Community Mind Set of Goals and Results.** Specific goals and objectives will be established to create an achievable revitalization effort. Working with all segments of the community, the program goals will reflect the neighborhood's priorities.

4. **Increase the Property and Sales Tax Base/Reduce Vacancy.** An increased tax base means economic improvement. New jobs, business, shopping opportunities offer advancement for residents. The Unity Council will establish vacancy and job creation rates as program performance criteria.

5. **Revitalize East 14th Street's Physical Assets.** The Unity Council will develop design guidelines and an implementation strategy for future physical improvements. The strategy will address specific physical improvements, identify both public and private investment requirements and create a work plan.

6. **Incorporate Public Art with Commercial Revitalization.** Working with local artists and the City of Oakland's Office of Cultural Arts, the Unity Council will work to implement a public and street art program.

Staff at the National Main Street Center (NMSC) reviewed these objectives and concluded that they were consistent with the National Main Street Center's Four-Point approach to revitalization. However, the following were among the concerns were raised by staff at the NMSC:

- **Displacement of Existing Businesses.** The Unity Council is developing a Transit Village project adjacent to the Fruitvale Commercial District. There is a concern that some businesses may be negatively impacted by the new retail activity in the transit village; and

- **Splintered Merchant Associations.** The multiple merchant associations present a difficult issue for the Fruitvale Main Street program. The strength of the business community is in concerted action and common objectives, and divided merchants weaken the potential to address problems collectively.

The Unity Council is aware of these concerns and sensitive to the needs of the business community. The Unity Council hopes to accomplish all of the objectives noted above, and has incorporated the NMSI as part of its economic development strategy. The Unity Council hopes to build on the existing cultural and ethnic diversity of businesses in the Fruitvale District, and will market/promote the area around a Latino theme because of the high concentration of Latinos in the community.

Research Methodology

This thesis emerged in part from the results of the 1996 Main Street survey of merchants and property owners which revealed that crime, disorder and safety were viewed by local businesses as major barriers to revitalizing the district. It also is the result of my own concern to address these problems. I am originally from the Fruitvale, and was raised a few blocks from the commercial district. I experienced the crime and fear first hand, and am acutely aware of local conditions and problems which erode the quality of urban life in the Fruitvale.

This thesis used a variety of data sources and research methodologies. First, information was collected from surveys and interviews. I also relied on police statistics to conduct my analysis. I examined the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative by doing a case study of its implementation in the Fruitvale. I worked for the Spanish Speaking Unity Council from July to August, 1996 where I administered Main Street surveys of merchants and property owners and conducted survey analysis.

Survey results were an important source of information for this thesis and revealed the extent to which crime, disorder and safety were pressing issues in the Fruitvale Commercial District. Approximately 122 local businesses (60 percent of total) were surveyed to understand the local conditions and problems. Businesses were surveyed in the period June-August, 1996 by three additional Unity Council staff members. The survey considers conditions at that time. Surveys were always administered in person, on a one-to-one basis, allowed me to move from the general to the particular: to find out what seemed most on the minds of the business community; to perform a "reality check" on accounts presented elsewhere; and to gather quotes to make the thesis more graphic and informative.

I also conducted interviews with Unity Council staff and board members, business and property owners in the Fruitvale District, public officials and staff for the City of Oakland, Fruitvale residents and community representatives, representatives of LISC and the National Main Street Center, and a Main Street project manager in inner city Boston. Interviews were conducted in person, over the phone and through informal conversations.

Interviews and survey data alone did not provide the neighborhood context. Working in the community was essential because it allowed for in-person interviews, and also provided me with a street-level perspective of the people in the area and the physical environment in which they live. I spent considerable time walking the district which provided me the opportunity to have informal conversations with merchants and neighborhood residents.

Organization of this Thesis

Chapter I examines the National Main Street Program (NMSP) and identifies its shortcomings as an effective strategy to address the concerns of troubled inner city commercial districts. Chapter II begins with an overview of the City of Oakland, and provides the urban context in which the Fruitvale District exists. Chapter III is a literature review and examines three factors which threaten community security and the image of the Fruitvale: crime, social disorder, and physical disorder. Chapter IV then looks at the extent to which crime, disorder and public safety problems negatively impact the Fruitvale. Chapter V moves beyond the district and introduces an important spatial element to the crime and disorder problem in the Fruitvale neighborhood -- the Fruitvale BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station and Sandborn Park. These local nodes must be secured and are a key factor to the success of the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative. Lastly, Chapter VI provides the Spanish Speaking Unity Council with recommendations to make the Fruitvale more secure and to improve the image in the district.

Chapter I :
The National Main Street Program and Commercial Revitalization in the Inner City[1]

This chapter examines the National Main Street Program (NMSP) and provides an overview of its approach to commercial revitalization. The chapter also identifies the shortcomings of the NMSP in addressing the needs and concerns of troubled inner city commercial districts. These shortcomings highlight the fact that inner city revitalization strategies must also address problems of crime, disorder and public safety.

The National Main Street Program

The National Main Street Program (NMSP), developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1977, is a comprehensive commercial revitalization strategy that encourages economic development within the context of historic preservation. The NMSP incorporates many strategies used in commercial revitalization in the last 40 years. It was originally developed to revitalize older, downtown shopping areas in towns and small cities through the rehabilitation of existing buildings in order to preserve their unique architectural features and maintain the historical character of the town center. The goal of the program is to increase economic activity in the commercial district by making it more attractive to shoppers, merchants and investors.

The NMSP is widely acknowledged to be a successful revitalization strategy in small cities where the local economy is healthy but a declining business district is in need of improvement and modernization (CUED 1983). "Main Street" is a proven approach in hundreds of small cities and towns with a population of less than 50,000 (National Trust for Historic Preservation 1990), and contains elements to address both the economic and physical conditions in the district. Nevertheless, *location* itself constitutes the most important factor in the success of the program. While the NMSP is a successful revitalization strategy in the economically stable, white, middle class communities for which it was designed, it does not meet the needs of residents, merchants, and investors in an economically depressed, ethnically diverse inner city.

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[1] Low-income urban neighborhoods with large minority and/or immigrant-intensive populations.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach

The NMSP relies on the following Four-Point Approach:

1. **Economic Restructuring:**
   Strengthening the existing economic assets of the business district while diversifying its economic base. Activities include retraining and expanding existing business, recruiting new businesses to provide a balanced mix, converting disused space into productive property, and sharpening the competitiveness of Main Street's traditional merchants.

2. **Organization:**
   Establishing a consensus and cooperation by building partnerships that will allow the development of a consistent revitalization program and permit the emergence of effective management and advocacy of the district. Diverse groups — bankers, city officials, merchants, chamber members, civic leaders, individual citizens, and others — must work together to improve the business district.

3. **Promotion:**
   Creating a positive image of the business district to attract customers and investors and rekindle community pride. Promotion includes the development of sophisticated joint retail sales and events and festivals, and the creation of a consistent image through graphic and media presentations. Promotion also includes target selling of the district to investors, developers, and new businesses.

4. **Design:**
   Enhancing the visual quality of the business district. This includes attention to all physical elements: buildings, storefronts, signs, public improvements, landscaping, merchandising displays, and promotional materials. The quality of the designed environment more that any other aspect demonstrates to the public the character of the district (National Trust for Historic Preservation 1990).

This Four-Point Approach has been a useful strategy to restore and develop the economic potential of many commercial districts in small cities and towns. A full-time project manager coordinates volunteer activities to ensure that the "four points" are proceeding steadily, and represents the district's interests. This person works closely

with business and property owners, city officials and community groups. The Main Street Program requires broad-based community involvement which includes businesses, property owners, schools, civic groups, social services providers, development organizations, and local government. In short, "Main Street" is largely a volunteer-driven program which pools together skills, resources, time and energy from a broad range of groups, organizations and constituents. The National Trust for Historic Preservation asserts that hundreds of small towns and cities have benefited and revitalized from the Main Street program (National Trust for Historic Preservation 1990).

A recent initiative has attempted to branch out of traditional Main Street settings, and rebuild commercial districts within low-income and/or economically distressed urban neighborhoods. In 1996, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center (NMSC), two national organizations with extensive experience in community building, joined forces to create the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (NMSI). The NMSI $3 million, four year demonstration project that will help six non-profit, community-based development corporations (CDCs) to implement the National Main Street Program in distressed inner city neighborhoods.

The 1996 initiative is the first ever attempt to give CDCs the opportunity to transfer the program to the inner city. Through the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (NMSI), the Main Street Program will bring its Four-Point Approach to a broader constituency in the nation's inner city neighborhoods. While the Four-Point Approach is a useful revitalization strategy, the question of transferability raises important concerns. The Four-Point Approach (by definition) tends to ignore serious problems such as crime, and the fear of crime.

The "Main Street" Program in the Inner City

Crime and public safety concerns create a profound impediment to inner- city commercial revitalization. While the Main Street Programs calls for economic restructuring to "attract new businesses" and "diversify the economic base" of a district, efforts to attract new retail activity in inner city areas are often difficult for a range of reasons, the foremost of which may be crime problems (Schuman 1994; Smith

1983). Fear of crime is one of the top reasons why businesses fail to consider inner city locations and why businesses located in the inner city leave (Porter 1995; Stewart 1986).

The Main Street Program aims to enhance the image of the commercial district through design/physical infrastructure improvements. While this is important, the program fails to address some of the underlying problems with the decline of the business district. For example, design improvements may improve the facades of businesses, but such improvements do not address the problems of graffiti and vandalism.

The Main Street Program also suggests a marketing/promotion strategy to improve the image of the commercial district, and thus attract customers and investors and rekindle community pride. This does not account for the fact that many inner-city neighborhoods suffer from poor reputations because of severe crime and social disorder problems. Any attempt to change the negative image of distressed shopping districts must address these problems which lie at the heart of inner city revitalization.

Finally, the Main Street Program is largely a volunteer-driven and relies heavily on the organization element. Organization establishes "consensus and cooperation by building partnerships" among the various groups—e.g. merchants, property owners, individual citizens etc.— that have a stake in the commercial district. While this is important, the program fails to address the problems associated with organizing in poor inner city neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are hard to organize because crime, poverty, and social disorganization undercut mutual trust and make it difficult for individuals to dedicate time and energy to such efforts. In multi-ethnic communities, language and cultural barriers are also among the important factors which can make it difficult to bring people together to address problems, and develop a shared vision (Bach, 1993; Briggs 1997; Horton 1995).

Chapter II :
Oakland, the Fruitvale Neighborhood and Commercial District

This chapter begins with an overview of the City of Oakland, and provides the urban context for the Fruitvale District. Understanding the city context and Fruitvale neighborhood dynamics should reveal some of the difficulties in transferring the Main Street Program to distressed inner city areas.

The City of Oakland

Shifting demographics. Reflecting the demographics of the state of California, Oakland's 360,000 population comprises approximately 65 percent people of color. According to the U.S. Census, the City's population grew 10 percent from 1980 to 1990. The largest percentage growth was in the Asian community (110 %) followed by Hispanics (59 %). No ethnic/racial group makes up a majority of the population of the City. Blacks represent the largest racial group (159,465 residents, or 42.8%), followed by White, Non-Hispanics (105,203 residents, or 28.3%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (53,025 residents, or 14.2%), and Hispanics (51,711 residents, or 13.9%). The smallest groups are Native Americans and Other Races which make up less than one percent of the total.

The City of Oakland has a high concentration of low income persons relative to the surrounding metropolitan region. The 1990 Census shows that Oakland's household income is far below the median for both Alameda County and the larger 9-county Bay area. The poverty rate for Oakland is also far above these measures (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Median Income/Poverty Rate for Oakland, Alameda County and the Bay Area			
	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Poverty Rate
Oakland	$27,095	$31,755	18.8%
Alameda County	$37, 544	$45,037	10.62%
9-County Bay Area	$41,595	$48, 532	8.50%

Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy,, Oakland 1993.

Because there are many established ethnic enclaves in Oakland, the City is a locus for second migration, with many new immigrants coming to Oakland from other

communities. Over 50 languages are spoken in Oakland public schools and 25 percent of children are classified as "limited English proficient" (Delgado 1993: 106).

Ethnic Enclaves. Minorities are heavily concentrated in the East Oakland flatlands. Three ethnic groups dominate in this section of the city: the Asian community near Lake Merritt (with large concentrations of Chinese and Vietnamese), the Latino/Mexican-American community in Central East Oakland; the eastern-most part of the city, which is the furthest from employment centers and the downtown, is predominately African-American. High crime rates and poor health care are chronic problems effecting many residents in the eastern section of the city (see Oakland - Sharing the Vision ,1992). For example, every census tract in East Oakland was designated "medically-underserved areas" by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services. This designation was based on high poverty rates, the shortage of primary care physicians, and high infant mortality rates (see Oakland - Sharing the Vision,1992).

Recent Economic Trends. The City of Oakland has experienced many changes and challenges in the past decade. Oakland's economic base experienced major shifts of employment from manufacturing to lower paying service and retail sector jobs, as numerous manufacturing establishments were either closed or significantly reduced. Added to this is the impact of the recessionary climate, which has heightened unemployment and poverty in the City (CHAS 1993: 8).

Oakland has also suffered two major disasters in recent years. The Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 destroyed or damaged over 1,000 affordable housing units and several downtown office buildings. In 1991, a massive firestorm swept through the Oakland hills, destroying homes and creating ripple effects on the local retail economy (CHAS 1993: 8). A 1994 market study by Keyser Marsten Associates Inc. also indicates that the "generally depressed" economy, and the recent earthquake and fires have created a "profound and far-reaching effect" on Oakland neighborhood's such as the Fruitvale (Keyser Marston Associates, 1994: 62-63). In addition to these problems, Oakland is still struggling to fight its reputation as the most dangerous city in the East Bay (see Patton 1996).

Crime in Oakland. Viewed by many as the poor neighbor of San Francisco (the Bay Area's major cultural and entertainment center), Oakland has long been considered drug and crime-infested (see The Economist 1991) . As an old central city, Oakland has

always resisted San Francisco's assumption of natural supremacy. Yet despite the fact that San Francisco has recently maintained higher per capita crime rates than Oakland, it remains one of the nation's most popular vacation destinations. At the same time, Oakland is haunted by its reputation for drugs and violent crime. In 1991 "Oakland had the highest murder rate of any large city in California, and a higher per capita homicide rate than Los Angeles or New York" (see Bishop 1992) . It is also well known that these statistics come from high-crime areas in the eastern-most part of the city.[1] And although reports on serious crimes appear to have dropped since 1992, Oakland's bad reputation has failed to improved (see Patton 1996).

Yet one must carefully distinguish between the realities and perceptions of crime in Oakland, especially East Oakland. The City has been unfairly characterized by the media and non-residents as a war zone (see Patton 1996). Investments in Oakland neighborhoods are jeopardized or impeded by exaggerated perceptions of a lack of safety. There are neighborhoods in many areas of the City with concerned residents and families that have a stake in their community. As active members in various crime and neighborhood associations, they provide the social infrastructure necessary for making neighborhoods safe (see Patton 1996). This reality needs to be included when painting a picture of life in Oakland.

The Fruitvale Neighborhood

History. The "Fruit Vale" took its name from its first orchard which was planted in 1856. The area became renowned for its mansions and gardens as wealthy San Francisco merchants and businessmen settled in this section of East Oakland. The Fruitvale merchant community quickly grew as the East 14th Streetcar line brought more settlers and businesses to the area. In the 1920s, the intersection of Fruitvale and East 14th became known as "Oakland's second downtown" (Chavez and Humpman, 1996: 13).

World War II brought many changes to the Fruitvale neighborhood. War-related industries resulted in the development of the waterfront and the increase of temporary workers that settled in temporary workers' housing. This wartime boom created many jobs and attracted large numbers of African-Americans from the South and Mexican

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[1] Captain Fred Sanchez, telephone interview with author. January 8, 1997.

Americans from the Southwest. The majority of these workers resided in West Oakland where housing was more affordable. St. Mary's Church, built in 1858 and the oldest Catholic church in Oakland, also served as the anchor for Mexicans settling during this period (Lujan, 1995: 9).

In the early 1960s, urban renewal projects and white flight to the suburbs rapidly changed the socioeconomic pattern of Oakland, and particularly of the eastern section of the City. Ethnic minority groups, including African-Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese, displaced by renewal projects sought refuge in the Fruitvale and other districts in East Oakland (Chow 1977: 134-135; Lujan 1994:11).

Fruitvale Demographics. The Fruitvale neighborhood and commercial district is located in the greater Fruitvale Community Development (CD) District. This area is defined by Census Tracts 4061 through 4066 and 4070 through 4072 and is bounded by MacArthur Boulevard, 23rd Street, the Estuary, and High Street (see Map 2.1).

The Fruitvale has changed dramatically since 1980 in size, ethnic and age composition. The Fruitvale population grew over 20 percent from 41,542 in 1980 to 50, 745 in 1990. This is attributed in part to replacement of one-person households and smaller, white households by larger Hispanic, Asian, and Black family households. In 1990, Hispanics were the dominant ethnic group in the neighborhood, comprising 35 percent of the residents in the Census. (Note that the Census definition of Hispanic overlaps with other racial/ethnic designations.). Blacks were 30 percent of the population, while whites and Asians were 12 percent and 21 percent respectively (see Table 2.2). It is important to note that a 1994 market study by Keyser Marsten Associates found that Census data under counts the minority population in the area, especially new immigrants.

Table 2.2 Fruitvale Population by Ethnicity in 1990	
Ethnicity	Population
White	6,242 (12%)
Black	15,084 (30%)
Hispanic (all races)	17,981 (35%)
Asian	10,870 (21%)
Native American	616 (1%)
Total Population	50, 745 (100%)

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

Map 2.1   The Fruitvale Neighborhood and Census Tracts
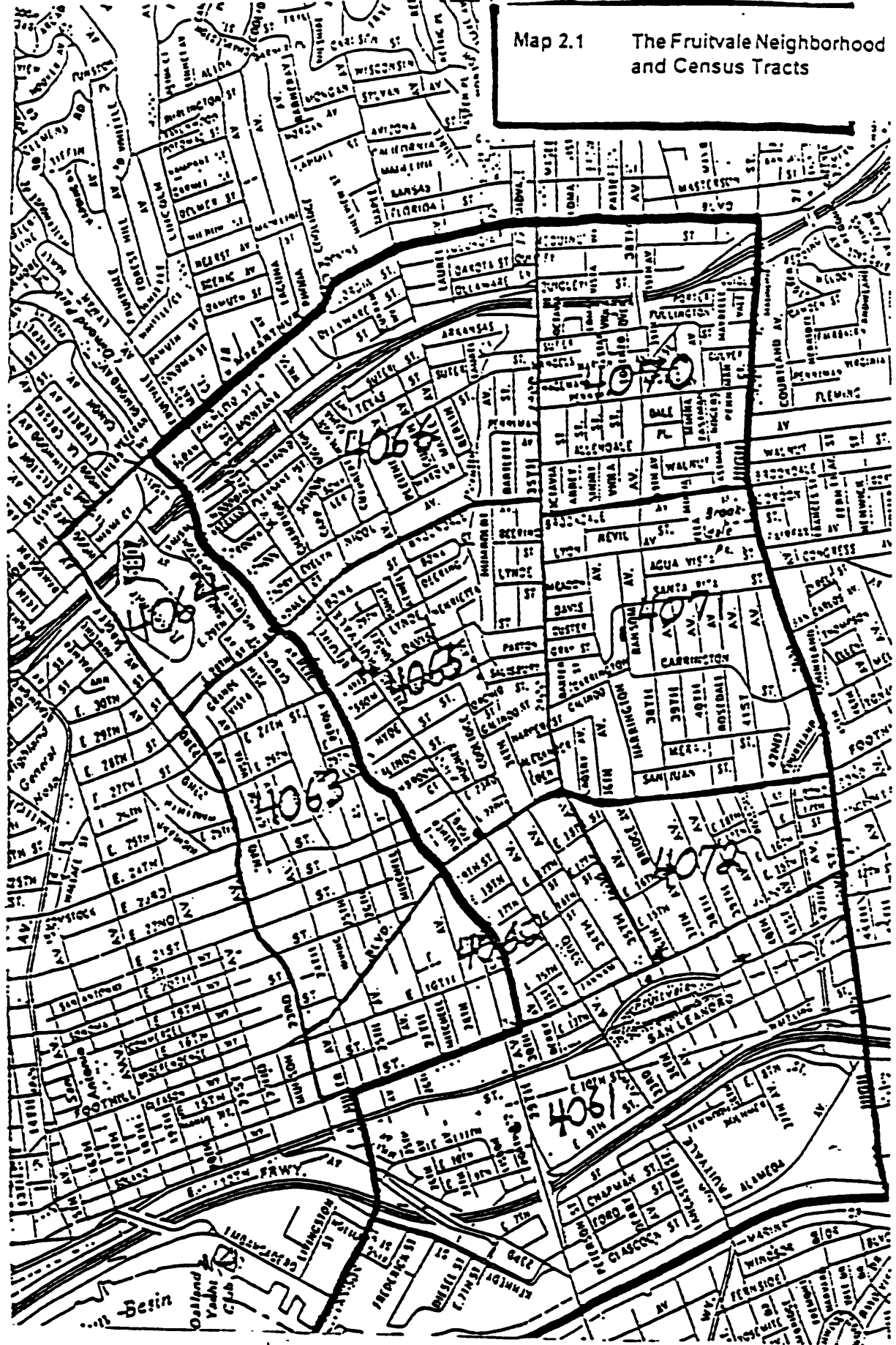
The Fruitvale has a diverse cultural heritage, and since 1980, immigrants from Latin America and Southeast Asia have settled in the area. Hispanics have more than doubled their share of the population since 1970 when they represented 16.7 percent of residents. Asians have also grown more rapidly, from 9.9 percent in 1980 to 21.4 percent in 1990. The white, non-Hispanic population has declined dramatically from 74.9 percent of the population in 1970 to 30.1 percent in 1980 and down to 12.3 percent in 1990.

The Fruitvale has become the focal point for the growth of the Hispanic population. A 1994 market study notes that the Fruitvale continues to be "a port of entry for immigrants, and the influx of Hispanic males" (Keyser Marston Associates 1994: 54). Perhaps one of the strongest indicators of this trend is the large number of Latino males congregating in parking lots during the early morning hours. These day laborers are paid low wages to work in areas such as the construction industry.

One of the most notable changes in the Fruitvale during the 1980s was the housing crises and severe overcrowding conditions (Bell 1992). Overcrowding has added pressure on urban services and in some cases, heightened racial tensions. Latino residents have noted the pressure from the growing Asian population. China Town has expanded eastward from downtown and created a new ethnic enclave — New China Town — which currently borders on the Fruitvale. Nevertheless, Latinos remain as the dominant ethnic group in the neighborhood, especially in certain sections. For example the 1990 Census shows that 66 percent of the total Hispanic population resides in the epicenter of Fruitvale (Census tracts 4061, 4062, and 4072).

The Fruitvale continues to be an area of concentration of low income persons, with significantly lower per capita income than the City as a whole. The 1990 Census shows that median household income for the Fruitvale neighborhood is $23,113. The median family income is slightly higher at $24,930, and per capital income is $8,748. In short, the majority of families live below the poverty line in the Fruitvale.

Neighborhood Institutions in the Fruitvale.   As in many American inner cities, the first grassroots mobilization in the Fruitvale starting in the 1960s. During this period, the Fruitvale developed into a predominantly Latino urban neighborhood, represented

largely by Mexicans. One of the most significant outcomes of this process was the formation of a network of institutions whose aim was to attract critical resources to the barrio. Among these groups was the Spanish Speaking Unity Council (SSUC), a community development corporation formed in 1964 to enable Latino groups to exchange ideas, discuss common problems and collaborate on common goals. Its underlying mission was to empower Spanish-speaking groups to bring about social change, as well as to preserve Latino culture and heritage. The SSUC's program helped attract the regional Latino population and reinforced the visible Latino identity in the Fruitvale.

The SSUC has made tremendous contributions to improving the quality of life for residents in the barrio. For example, the organization compelled the City to create the first Latino library in the area, obtained funds for an adult education program that provided instruction in English as a Second Language, and successfully developed the following projects:

- Posada De Colores, 100 units of subsidized housing;
- Casa De Las Flores, 20 units of subsidized elderly housing;
- Las Casitas, 61 units of affordable housing;
- De Colores Children Campus, serving 285 Head Start students;
- Community Resource Centers (3); and
- Fruitvale Senior Center.

Most recently, the SSUC is spearheading a large $100 million, mixed-use real estate development project planned for the area surrounding the existing Fruitvale BART station. It has also been awarded a H.U.D. Section 202 grant for 68 affordable elderly units which will be included in the Transit Village project.

The Fruitvale Community Collaborative (FCC) was created 1991 by the SSUC initially to organize the many key constituencies in the community. The FCC is a coalition of several neighborhood organizations that involves local residents in efforts to address issues such as physical neighborhood improvements and safety. For example, the FCC is currently working with community residents to form coalitions/committees around activities which include the following:

- Annual clean-ups;

- Tree planting;
- Graffiti abatement projects;
- Leadership training;
- Community walks (safety patrols);
- Park activities;
- Welfare reform and immigration education; and
- Crime prevention.

The FCC has a strong track record at developing partnerships with community resident organizations, and working with residents of diverse backgrounds. Recently, the FCC hired a Vietnamese organizer to develop a stronger relationship with the Asian community. The FCC has also been very effective at identifying (and prioritizing) the more pressing quality of life issues raised in community meetings. For example, the FCC was the leading force behind closing down several troublesome bars such as Ye Old (see Chapter IV).

Another important neighborhood serving organization in the Fruitvale is La Clinica De La Raza. La Clinica is a health care center for low income residents. Although La Clinica is Latino-oriented and has Spanish-speaking staff, it also provides needed services for all ethnic and racial groups. La Clinica is the largest employer in the Fruitvale and has annual budget of more than $10 million annually. It serves more than 12,000 patients and has over 50,000 patient encounters per year. Centro Legal De La Raza, located a few minutes from La Clinica, also provides legal services for low income people.

Saint Elizabeth's Catholic Church, established in the 1890s, is the oldest instituition in the Fruitvale. The church also oversees the primary and high schools, and has been educating local residents since 1921. For decades, St. Elizabeth's provided quality education for the offspring of white, middle-class Catholic families (Garner, 1991: 2). However, that changed with white flight into the suburbs; by the early 1970s, African-American and Latino's represented most of the student body. In 1994, the largest group was African American (62 %), followed by Latino (28 %), Filipino (6 %), white (2 %), and other (2 %).

Together, the church and school are the most respected and valued resources in the Fruitvale community. The church is also considered by many local residents as the greatest stabilizing (and mobilizing) force in the neighborhood. Up to 1,000 people attend masses on Sunday and attracts large numbers of Latinos from the entire East Bay region. St. Elizabeth church also offers social service and educational programs for parishioners and the larger community.

The Fruitvale Commercial District

The Fruitvale Commercial District is located in the heart of the Fruitvale and is centered along East 14th Street from 28th to 40th Avenue, bounded by Farnam on the north and East 12th to the south and Fruitvale Avenue between East 12th and East 16th Streets (see Map 2.2).[2] The district is generally made up of small, two-and three-story traditional commercial buildings with storefronts abutting the sidewalk. A compact and dense urban space, the district is composed of early 20th-century buildings. The architectural style of the district is a diverse range of American styles, including Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Art Deco, and Gothic Revival.

The Fruitvale is accessible by automobile and public transportation. Regional access to the commercial district is available from the Fruitvale Avenue exit on Interstate 880 and Highway 580, both of which connect with the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge, the South Bay, the East Bay, and Sacramento. Regional access is also provided by the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and eight major AC Transit lines. Local access is provided by a grid pattern street system including Fruitvale Avenue, High Street, 42nd Avenue, East 12th Street, East 14th Street (the primary thoroughfare), and 35th Avenue.

There is no other commercial district in the City of Oakland like the Fruitvale. It is one of the liveliest neighborhood commercial strips. During the afternoon, the district is active with pedestrian activity and generates substantial foot traffic. A big draw to the commercial area during lunch hours is the large number of Mexican restaurants which have a reputation for excellence. Local institutions and notable landmarks function as important stabilizing forces.

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[2] This is the proposed target area for the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative — a comprehensive commercial revitalization program in the Fruitvale district.

Map 2.2   The Fruitvale Commercial District

National Main Street Commercial Neighborhood
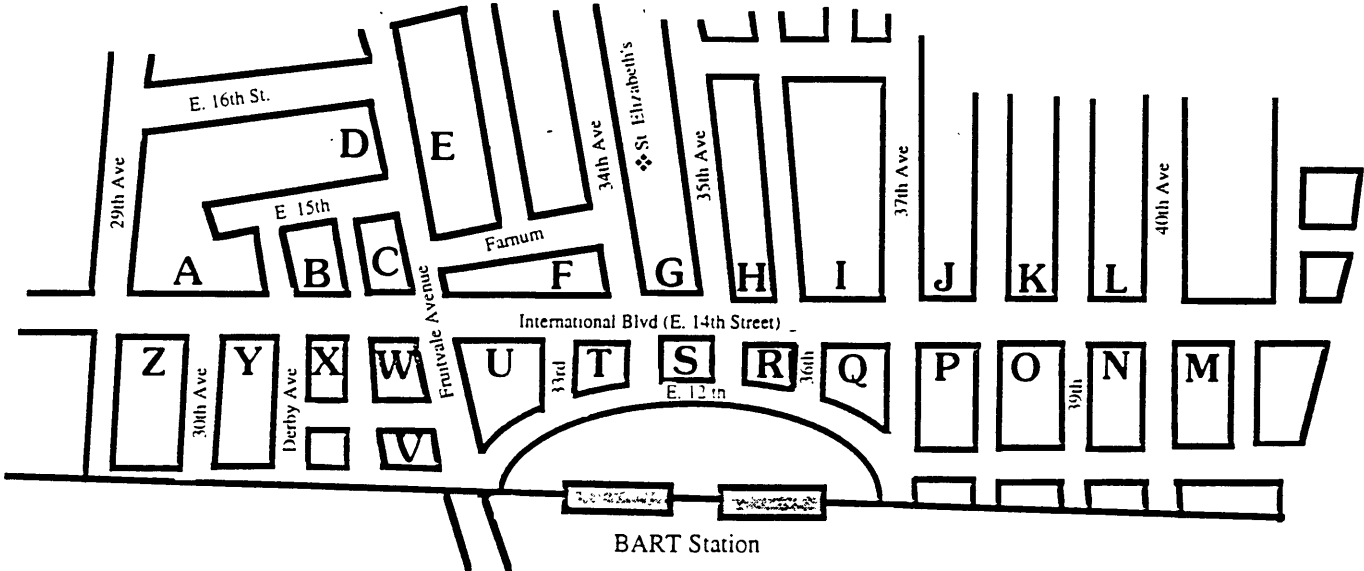
As discussed earlier, a number of community-based organizations provide a strong social infrastructure and attract many people to the area. Also, the Fruitvale BART station, St. Elizabeth's, and Sanborn Park are valued resources and key community symbols. These public places serve as magnets which draw hundreds of people to the area. Together they provide a dynamic urban core and have great potential for generating positive spillover effects onto the commercial district (see Map 2.3).

The Fruitvale Commercial District is represented by approximately 200 businesses. The area is served by a broad mix of commercial, retail, and service oriented uses. Retail businesses are the dominant Fruitvale business sector, followed by personal and business services. These businesses are predominately establishments that are independently owned entrepreneurial ventures. There is little representation of major chain retail operations. The major chain retails in the Fruitvale district are Payless Shoes Source, Rent-A-Center, Rentronics, Wendy's, Burger King and branch offices of Bank of America and American Savings.

In 1996, Oakland's Community and Economic Development Agency indicated that the Fruitvale was the third largest sales generating neighborhood commercial district in the City. A 1994 market study identifies a Primary Trade Area (PTA) of over 90,000 people.[3] This represents a large market area "which is comparable in size to the Bay Area cities of Berkeley, Fremont, Hayward and Daly City" (Keyser Marsten Associates, Inc., 1994: 61). The sales leakage is estimated in excess of $170 million. This leakage can be targeted for new retail and other services along the East 14th Street area.

One primary retail function served by businesses in the district is convenience shopping, which includes local grocery stores and markets, liquor and convenience stores, and restaurant or fast food establishments. Many businesses market and merchandise themselves to the Latino community, and Spanish is a primary language of commerce in the district. Many products and foods are specifically target Mexican culture and diet, and the majority of eating establishments feature a Mexican menu.

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[3] For retail uses, the PTA is defined as the area from which stores in the Fruitvale area can draw up to 85% of their sales from the residential demand segment.

Map 2.3   The Fruitvale Neighborhood and Landmarks

Sanborn Park ⇒

Saint Elizabeth's ⇒

The Fruitvale BART Station ⇒

The Fruitvale Commercial District ⇒
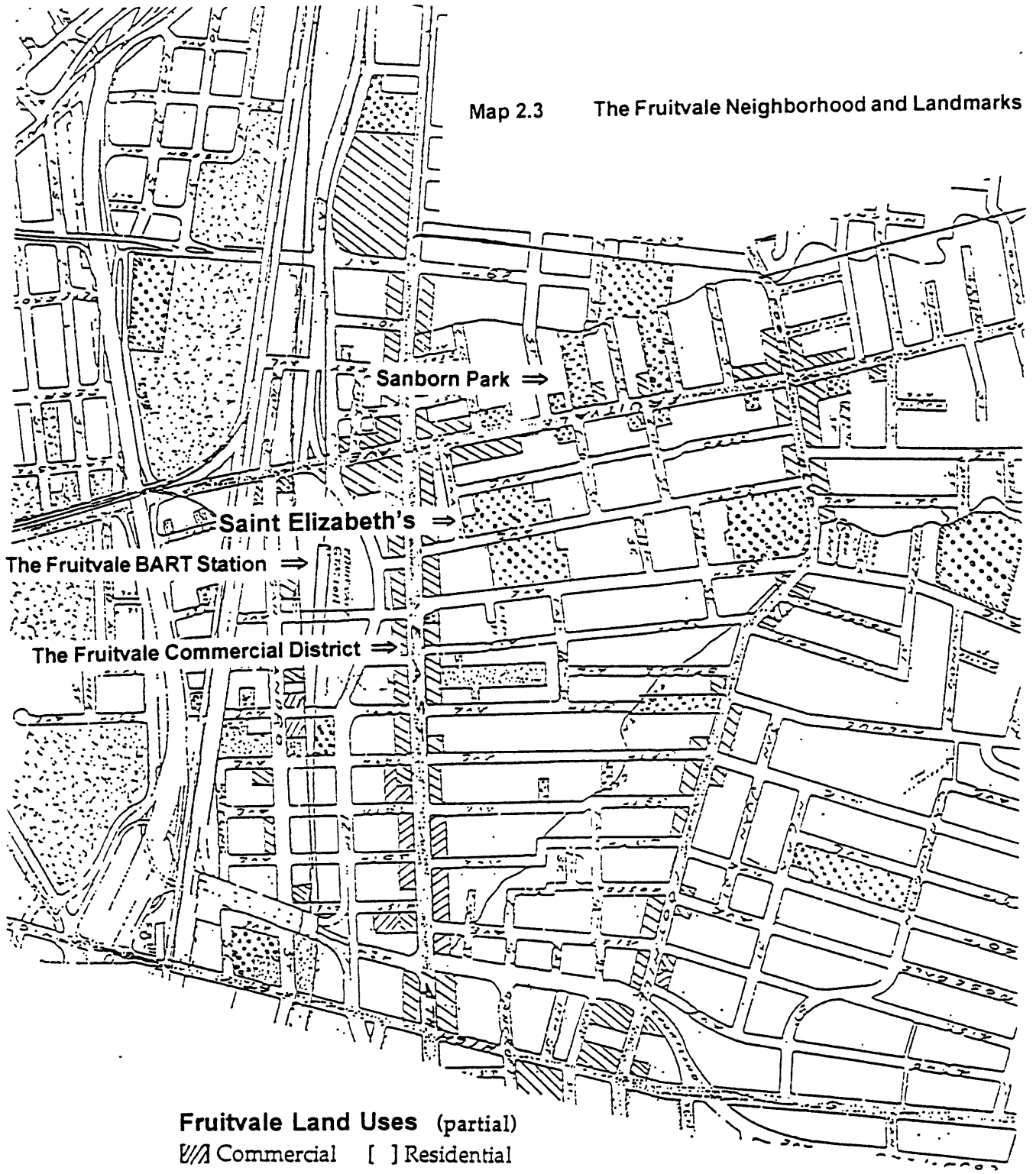
Fruitvale Land Uses (partial)

▨ Commercial   [ ] Residential

▧ Auto Related   [:·:] Institutional

[⸱⸱] Industrial   [⸴⸴] Recreational

The Fruitvale also has one the most diverse merchant populations in the City. In a 1996 Main Street survey 122 businesses (conducted by the SSUC) found that while the majority of merchants are Latino (51 percent), there is also a strong multi-ethnic presence in the district which includes: Asians (19 percent), Whites (12 percent), African-Americans (6 percent) and other (12 percent), which includes people of Middle Eastern descent.

On May 7th, 1996, Oakland City Council members made a significant move to "showcase the street's diversity" by changing the name of the primary thoroughfare from East 14th to International Boulevard.[4] It is hoped that this will change the thoroughfare's negative image, and help turn the Fruitvale Commercial District "into a destination for Bay Area visitors and tourists" (See Walker). The district is perceived as unsafe and this has been a problem for many years. High crime rates and poor public safety images (i.e. the reality and perception of crime) are critical factors which negatively impact the Fruitvale. These are the most pressing issues according to local residents, merchants and property owners. Chapter IV will further examine the extent to which these problems present barriers to commercial revitalization.

There are three merchants associations in the Fruitvale Commercial District. However, they do not collaborate and this has presented present a difficult issue for the Spanish Speaking Unity Council and the Fruitvale Main Street Program. Moreover, the majority of merchants do not participate in voluntary and formal organizations which has made it very difficult to develop a shared vision and collectively address problems. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter VI.

Initiatives to Revitalize the Fruitvale. Current efforts to revitalize the Fruitvale Commercial District and neighborhood include:

- The appropriation of $200,000 of 1995 Community Development Block Grant Funds to improve existing commercial storefronts;

- The Fruitvale Bart Transit Village Initiative (see Chapter V);

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[4] After an emotional debate, the council approved the change on a 6-to-2 vote despite objections from several merchants and residents who called the proposal frivolous and irrelevant to the needs in the corridor (see Walker).

- The Fruitvale Open Space Initiative (see Chapter V); and

- The Neighborhood Main Street Initiative.

In the Spring of 1996, the Spanish Speaking Unity (SSUC) was selected to operate the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative(NMSI) — a comprehensive commercial revitalization program developed jointly by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center (NMSC). In August of 1996, the SSUC hired a "Main Street" project manager to implement the Main Streets Initiative which is currently in its early stages. Recently, the most significant improvement in the district's appearance is due to the appropriation of $200,000 of 1995 CDBG funds to improve exiting commercial storefronts. A number of businesses have participated in the facade improvement program which has improved both the image and atmosphere of the district (see before and after photos in Appendix A).

The NMSI has also made notable progress at educating and recruiting some merchants around particular "Main Streets" projects. One example is an effort to address the poor physical condition of the sidewalks and the trash and litter problem. Block captains have been assigned to serve as leaders for specific sections of the district. These captains are responsible for contacting neighboring businesses and ensuring that the sidewalks are cleaned by individual shopkeepers on a regular basis. This "collective action" has had some success because some merchants see it in their self-interest to get involved. A clean and attractive district environment will improve the image of the area and thus attract more shoppers and investors.

The Fruitvale is now at an economic turning point with new development initiatives that are attempting to revitalize the area. The SSUC has embarked on several a major initiatives such as the Transit Village and the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative. The goal of these projects is to generate jobs, retain and attract new retail and service businesses, and revitalize existing facilities and businesses in the area. However, this thesis argues that efforts to revitalize the Fruitvale should aggressively address crime, disorder and security issues. These problems must be confronted to restore a positive sense of community as well as to protect the very substantial investments that have been made in the Fruitvale.

Chapter III:
Crime, Disorder and Public Safety

High crime rates and poor public safety images (i.e. the reality and the perception of crime) are inescapable facts that negatively impact many inner city neighborhoods. These problems have greatly affected the quality of urban life and contributed to an environment of decline and disinvestment. Several theories have recently attempted to explain the extent to which community security is threatened by problems other than "index" crimes. These theories have linked several characteristics of urban environments—social and physical—to public safety problems. This chapter is a literature review and examines three factors which threaten community security in the Fruitvale:

- Crime;
- Social disorder; and
- Physical disorder.

The chapter discusses the definition of *crime,* and *social disorder* and examines the relationship among crime, social disorder and public safety. This chapter will also define *physical disorder* and examine the extent to which physical characteristics of a neighborhood are linked to public safety and the perception of public safety. Understanding these factors should shed some light on the more pressing problems in the Fruitvale.

Understanding Crime, Social Disorder and Physical Disorder

Crime

What is crime? In the most general sense, a crime is an act committed in violation of a law prohibiting it; specifically, any felony or misdemeanor. Crime is defined by Perkins (1966) as "any social harm defined and made punishable by law." Crimes are regarded as offenses against the state because their perpetration in some way adversely affects the community. There has been extensive research on all types of crime—murder, rape, burglary, robbery, assault, etc.—and countless studies document how levels of crime vary from place to place. These studies have linked levels of crime to all sorts of variables. As Skogan (1990) notes:

There seems to be no social handicap or environmental pathology that is not correlated with crime rates for cities, neighborhoods, or blocks, including such diverse factors as average building height, the turbeculoses rate, air pollution levels, and distance from the downtown (Skogan 1990:9).

Research on crime rates have also explored the influences that move with broad geographical and social changes. These include urbanization; age structure of the population; racial composition; and crime opportunities and control in the community (Wilson 1983; Wilson et al. 1985).

It is clear that levels of crime vary greatly from place to place. Incidents of crime (especially street crime) are more common in poor neighborhoods than in middle-class suburbs (Downs 1995; Wilson 1983; Wilson 1997). However, street crime is not just an inner city problem. As Downs (1995) explains, crime and violence is a social problem that has spread beyond inner-city neighborhoods to suburban communities (Downs 1995: 130).

Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that problems of crime and violence are most severe in urban neighborhoods with high concentrations of low-income households and poverty (Walters 1992; Wilson 1987; Wilson 1997). Such low-income inner city neighborhoods are plagued with other socioeconomic problems that contribute to crime such as high unemployment and poor public education systems (Wilson, 1987). They suffer from what Downs (1995) calls a "spatial inefficiency" problem. Though empirical evidence is lacking in many areas, inner-city residents are often isolated in the most fundamental sense (i.e. socially and spatially) from job and educational opportunities. Furthermore, they are exposed to a culture of violence that extends into different facets of everyday life (Wilson 1997). As Downs argues, many inner-city schools are plagued with "...destructive social values acquired from violence-prone peers..." (Downs 1995: 130). The concentration of crime in urban areas is reinforced by "exclusionary policies" of many suburban local governments which erect zoning, building codes and other regulatory barriers to minimize the construction of low-income housing, and thus further isolate the poor (Denton and Massey 1993; Downs 1995; Wilson 1997).

Crime and Disinvestment.   Another perspective has produced research which examines the impact of crime on other low-income neighborhood problems:

In these studies crime is treated as the causal variable, one that has consequences for individuals and neighborhoods. For example, high rates of crime are related to inner-city depopulation, declining property values, and high expenditures on the police (Skogan 1990 : 10).

One of the greatest barriers to revitalizing low-income neighborhoods is crime, and the fear of crime (Schuman 1994; Stewart 1986; Smith 1983). Crime drives away residents and businesses, creating a profound impediment to urban economic development (Porter 1995; Sampson and Wooldredge 1986). First, the reality and perception of crime creates an unwillingness to patronize inner-city establishments. Second, crime against property raises operating costs and the reality and perception of crime restricts local business hours of operation. Fear of crime is one of the top reasons why businesses fail to consider inner city locations and why businesses already located in the inner city left (Porter 1995; Stewart 1986).

Crime, Fear and Social Relations. Criminal activity creates fear of particular public spaces, and can lead victims of crime to avoid certain areas. Crimes not only hurt particular individuals, but "... also threaten the more generalized sense that the community is governed by a reliable and just moral order" (Moore 1997: 7). The negative impacts on urban life and neighborhoods are tremendous. As Moore describes, security is vital to communities and without it:

> ... every-day life is nasty, brutish and short. Further, those with no future have little incentive to invest: they buy merchandise rather than property, and recreation rather than education. Instead of developing the trusting relationships that form the heart of strong communities, they become suspicious and exploitative (Moore 1997: 1).

In response to fear, people avoid one another, which weakens controls and fractures social relations. Stoutland's (1995) research revealed that trust problems and high crime rates are substantial barriers to both organizational participation and individual relationship. This research confirms what Rainwater (1970) and Merry (1981) found in studies of public housing projects.

Of course, the type of crime largely determines the extent to which security and social order are threatened.[1] The danger of criminal attack is a salient threat that confronts public urban areas. Criminologists have long considered that a community's crime concerns should focus on serious crimes committed by strangers in public places. Wilson describes how these attacks shatter the social fabric in communities:

> Predatory crime does not merely victimize individuals, it impedes and, in the extreme case, prevents the formation and maintenance of community. By disrupting the delicate nexus of ties, formal and informal, by which we are linked to our neighbors, crime atomizes society and makes of its members mere individual calculators estimating their own advantage, especially their chances for survival amidst their fellows (Wilson 1983: 26).

This commentary introduces the challenges faced by urban neighborhoods in developing "social capital" (Putnam 1993, 1995). High crime rates can create "...barriers to social capital formation at both individual and associational levels" (Briggs and Mueller 1997: 206). When community residents live in fear, their willingness to reach out, and develop social relationships is largely reduced. Community insecurity and fear of predatory criminals creates significant obstacles to communication and the development of trust (Briggs and Mueller 1997; Skogan 1988). The relationship between crime and social relations is clearly an important one. As Moore observes:

> If social relationships represent a kind of capital that can provide insurance against a set of important risks, and if these are particularly threatened by crime, then it becomes more understandable why crime would be a particularly important threat to security...[S]ecurity, in the end, is a state of mind: one in which one feels free from concerns about the threats to one's life, health, and well-being. Such a state of mind is not only enjoyable, but it also encourages investment in both property and strong social relationships (Moore 1997: 4-5).

Levels of crime are strongly linked to fear and community insecurity. High crime rates provide evidence that an area is out of "social control." A 1967 report to the

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[1] Research confirms what common sense would predict: people regard violent crimes, such as murder and rape, as more serious than less violent crimes, such as property offenses (Kelling and Coles 1996: 29-31).

National Crime Commission describes how "social control"—the development and enforcement of norms about public behavior—is affected by crime:

> We have found that attitudes of citizens regarding crime are less affected by their past victimization experiences than by their ideas about what is going in their community—fears about a weakening of social controls in which they feel their safety and the broader fabric of social life is ultimately dependent (Biderman et al., 1967: 160).

The Role of Race and Ethnicity. Social control enters a new dimension in multi-ethnic communities. How different ethnic and racial groups interact, and the level of trust (and fear) between groups further complicates social relations within diverse communities. The interaction between different ethnic and racial groups is becoming increasingly important in many inner-city neighborhoods and brings new challenges. Racial and ethnic tensions are not uncommon, and are heightened because of factors such as social distance, language and prejudice (Bach 1993; Briggs and Mueller 1997; Skogan 1988).

In business districts, racial tensions, and crime are also influenced by residential segregation and weak informal. Perhaps the most recognized and publicized example is the tension between Koreans shopkeepers and African American customers. A report to the Ford foundation commented on a neighborhood business district in Chicago:

> ... Korean shopkeepers described the difficulties of developing personal relationships ... Petty crimes also created tensions when and where few informal connections existed between the shopkeepers and customers. Although media reports often focus only on clashes between Korean shopkeepers and African-American customers, shopkeepers hold similar concerns and stereotypes about potential offenders from all ethnic groups (Bach 1993: 40).

In multicultural communities, there are also conflicting views regarding both causes of crime and how to solve it. As Skogan explains:

> Where neighborhoods are divided by race and class, concern about crime can be an expression of conflict between groups. Preservationists will identify the problem as some of the residents around and among them. Watching for "suspicious people" easily becomes defined as watching for a particular race

and aggressively monitoring the circumstances under which different races come into contact (Skogan 1988: 47).

Crime in the inner city threatens the development of social capital and weakens social control, both of which are related to notions of fear and community security. How people identify the crime problem and which offenses are most threatening is also complex, and can be subjective. Several "official" reports with crime statistics have made attempts over the years to record and define this difficult problem, but they can be confusing and misleading (Wilson et al. 1983: 12).

Classifying Crime. To better understand the crime problem, it is important to classify and examine the offenses which pose the greatest threat to security in neighborhoods and public places. As Daniel Glazer noted "the first step in trying to understand complex phenomena is to describe them and thereby to classify their variations" (Glaser 1974).

In the United States, an important source for classifying and recording national crime rates is the Federal Uniform Crime Report (UCR). Since 1932, the UCR has gathered statistics on America's urban "crime problem" which includes an "index" for assessing local crime rates. "Serious crimes" are comprised of the following offenses: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson (Kelling and Coles 1996: 27). Implicit in this list are "judgments about the relative severity of particular crimes—judgments that were made originally by police during the development of the UCR [during the 1920s] and continue to be widely accepted today" (Kelling and Coles 1996: 28-29).

Many people would agree with the values embedded in the list of offenses: crimes such as murder, rape, assault and robbery (with violence or threat of violence) are most severe. Crimes against property such as burglary or motor vehicle theft, though not a direct threat to personal health, are serious and potentially life threatening. Moreover, for a poor individual or household struggling to "make ends meet," crimes which result in the loss of money, a car or other personal valuables can be devastating.

However, while the UCR appears to accurately identify the broad range of serious crimes in urban America, the index fails to include the remaining list of problems relating to crime (and public safety). For example, security in inner-city business districts is

also threatened by offenses against public order (i.e. social disorders) such as public drinking and drunkenness, drug use and dealing, public urination and loitering which can be quite severe. That is, businesses and residents feel threatened not only by crime, but also by social disorders. Kelling and Coles (1996) describe the challenge in identifying and confronting the crime problem:

> Those of us who live, work, and play in cities face an amalgam of disorder, fear, serious crime, and urban decay: the crime problem does not begin with serious, or "index" crime. Conceiving of it and addressing it as such, as has occurred for thirty years in national debates about crime, leads to bad public policy, poor legal thinking and practice, and distorted criminal justice practices and priorities. The distinctions among disorder, fear, and serious crimes are not trivial. Citizens understand the experiences of disorder and fear, quite apart from serious crime, and want to do something done about them (Kelling and Coles 1996: 5).

The nature of the "crime problem" in dense urban areas goes beyond identifying the different types of crime that occur. It is particularly difficult to classify (or make judgments) about the relative severity of particular crimes, especially in public spaces. For example, a commercial district is a complex place of interactions that can become dramatically more threatening as the nature, scale and frequency of those interactions increase. It is also important to make the distinctions between serious crimes, fear and disorder. What follows is an a definition social disorder, and discussion of related theories which can help explain the social conditions and problems in public places.

Social Disorder

Research on crime and safety suggests that a link exists between controlling "signs of disorder" and controlling crime. Disorderly behavior such as public drunkenness, use and dealing, and street harassment may weaken a community's "informal control" which permits offenses against public order and street crime to flourish. Researchers argue that the link between order-maintenance and crime prevention is important, and should be addressed to improve public safety in neighborhoods and other public places. "Order-maintenance" also has a dual meaning, and refers to two classes of disorder: social and physical. This section will examine how social disorder and threats to community security. The following section will discuss physical disorder, and examine

how this problem is linked to community image and can contribute to the perception of a lack of safety.

The "Disorder" Theory. The disorder theory (Skogan 1990) argues that urban neighborhoods are often confronted with conditions that "signal a breakdown of the local social order," and erode "what control neighborhood residents can maintain over local events and conditions" (Skogan 1990: 2-3). His investigations shows that there is, indeed, an important relationship between disorder, fear, and area crime. According to Skogan's theory, there are two general classes of disorder: social and physical. He defines social and physical disorder as follows:

> Social disorder is a matter of behavior: you see it happen (public drinking, or prostitution), experience it (catcalling or sexual harassment), or notice direct evidence of it (graffiti, or vandalism). Physical disorder involves visual signs of neglect and unchecked decay: abandoned or ill-kept buildings, broken streetlights, trash-filled lots, and alleys strewn with garbage and alive with rats. By and large, physical disorder refers to ongoing conditions, while social disorder appears as a series of more-or-less episodic events (Skogan 1990:4).

Skogan's research uses two types of data: first, a survey of 13,000 individuals in urban neighborhoods nationwide; and second, independent observations of neighborhoods made by field researchers in ten of the forty neighborhoods which documented conditions there, recording "physical disorders" as well social disorders—street prostitution, public drunkenness, drug dealing, and other such behaviors. Skogan also provides a more general definition and commentary on what these conditions have in common:

> All involve public displays of incivility, for the concept of disorder does not stretch to cover such private problems as intrafamiliy conflict. They may or may not be illegal...but whatever their legal status, these disorders were an affront to widely supported community values. Finally, many (but not all) disorders are produced by people who are themselves considered disreputable or vaguely threatening" (Skogan 1990: 46-47).

From Skogan's research, three important findings emerged. First, regardless of ethnicity and class community residents generally concurred about what constituted

disorder and how much disorder was present locally. Disorderly behavior and conditions vary across communities; however, the 13,000 total survey responses reported the following forms of social disorder most frequently: public drinking and lounging drunks; loitering youths and corner gangs; drug use; noisy neighbors; panhandling and harassment on the street; and street prostitution.

Public drinking was "the most highly-rated" form of disorder across the 40 study neighborhoods. Skogan's research also revealed that many drinkers "gather on commercial strips, often in front of liquor stores and taverns" (Skogan 1990: 22). The sale and use of drugs was also a "highly-ranked problem," followed closely by loitering (Skogan 1990: 21-22). Women often reported that loitering was linked to offensive behavior such as street harassment, which supports important research by Gardner (1980). Fear was also "...a frequent response, most discernible in regard to social disorder" (Skogan 1990: 47). People were not only concerned for themselves, but also for their children (Skogan 1990: 47). It is important to note that many social disorders were problems common in public places such as parks, train stations and retail strips.

Second, Skogan's research revealed that residents of low-income, high unemployment, low-education, mostly minority urban areas were "far more likely to report extensive problems with disorder in their community" (Skogan 1990: 59). Thirdly, Skogan found that disorder contributed to neighborhood decline by giving the community a bad reputation throughout the city. As a result, disorder "discourages outside investors, and makes it more difficult for local businesses to attract customers from outside. All of this erodes the value of real estate ... contributing to the further deterioration and abandonment of residential and commercial buildings" (Skogan 1990: 65).

Measuring the Severity of Disorder. So when are social disorders really serious? At what point do disorderly acts merit intervention? Are social disorders truly a threat to community security in the Fruitvale district? If so, which acts are most threatening? Kelling and Coles (1996) explain that the answers to these questions require "a determination based upon two measures":

> first, the seriousness of virtually any crime—major as well as minor—is determined not solely by heinousness of the act itself, but also by the context in which the behavior takes place. Second, the seriousness of any crime is similarly

dependent not upon the harm done to the immediate victim alone, but also upon the injury to and impact on the entire community (Kelling and Coles 1996: 30).

Their research points to cases where disorderly behavior can be more consequential for neighborhood commercial centers than "serious index crimes." One case examines how businesses in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, in New York City where negatively impacted by disorderly behavior such as "hanging out," using drugs, panhandling, and harassment of shoppers and pedestrians. They reported the following:

> Businesses owners made it clear that while they feared robbery, robberies could be "managed" through security, control of merchandise, and control of cash flow. They could not survive, however, if shoppers were unwilling to cross the phalanx of importuning street people, for businesses would languish and ultimately fail..." (Kelling and Coles 1996: 31).

This finding reveals an important piece of information for business districts, and other public places, suffering from the "crime problem." That is, disorderly behavior may in fact be more consequential for a particular neighborhood or business district than the more "serious" crime of robbery. Of course, this will vary depending on the particular place in question. A busy, popular shopping center and a quiet suburb may need almost no police protection and order-maintenance. On the other hand, an inner-city neighborhood suffering from drugs, violence, rowdy bars, public drunkenness, and street harassment may require numerous foot patrols, and even community involvement, to maintain a sense of order and civility. I will now define physical disorder and examine the extent to which physical conditions of a neighborhood are linked to community image and the perception of a lack of safety.

Physical Disorders

Physical disorders are visible signs of neglect and incivility which contribute to the physical deterioration of urban areas. The "broken windows" theory (Wilson and Kelling 1982) was one of the first attempts to described the relationship between disorder and crime. Broken window theory argued that crime was casually linked to urban decay and social disorder. An unrepaired broken window "is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows cost nothing" (Wilson and Kelling 1982: 31).

Broken windows, and other signs of physical deterioration, lead to a perception of lack of public order and can lead people away from public places.

Perhaps the most important observation in the "broken windows" theory however, is the link between controlling "signs of disorder" and controlling crime. The fear caused by "signs of disorder" encourages the community to relax its "informal control." The weak social control permits visible "signs of crime" to emerge; consequently the neighborhood appears "out of control" which then attracts criminal behavior. According to Wilson and Keeling, fighting crime requires "fixing broken windows," which includes actions against graffiti, trash, loitering, drunks on the street and other forms of disorder. However, the precise relationship between disorder and crime is unclear, and often debated, in part because empirical evidence is still limited (Briggs and Mueller 1997: 140).

Restoring Order and "Taking Back the Streets"

Recently, a number of strategies have attempted to address security issues in commercial districts and other public places. Firstly, crime prevention literature suggests that increasing the foot patrols is the most effective way to restore order (Briggs and Mueller 1997; Lewis 1996). But this is costly and often not possible in many cities where police forces are shrinking, not growing. During the last two decades, increasing urban crime has forced the law enforcement community to step back and examine the delivery of public safety with fewer resources. The emergence of popular efforts such as community policing, and neighborhood crime-watch programs have produced some encouraging success stories (Wilson and Keeling 1982; Wilson and Keeling 1989; Briggs and Mueller 1997). These strategies include "foot patrol, team policing, administrative decentralized store front offices, and other efforts to build two-way communication into neighborhood police work" (Skogan 1990: 50). In short, community-oriented efforts attempt to make the police more reliable partners to neighborhood groups. Community development corporations have also been increasingly active at addressing community security issues, and researcher's suggest that an ideal situation "may well be one in which a strong CDC works with a local police force that is highly committed to community-oriented policing" (Briggs and Mueller 1997: 164).

Local city agencies have also taken rather aggressive steps to "take back the streets" and restore order in public places. For example, Seattle developed a "sidewalk"

ordinance which prohibits from people sitting or lying down on a public sidewalk from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Seattle also has an "aggressive panhandling" ordinance which prohibits begging "that would make a reasonable person fearful" (Kelling and Coles 1996: 221). City officials argue that these ordinances are necessary to ensure pedestrian safety and the economic vitality of commercial areas. However, these ordinances are highly debated and have been challenged in the courts (Kelling and Coles 1996: 217-221).

Private citizens have also joined together in cities such as Baltimore, San Francisco, San Diego and Seattle to improve commercial districts through the formation of business improvement districts (BIDs).[2] BID revenues have been used to hire security guards, and to pay for physical improvements such as cleaning sidewalks and clearing graffiti (Kelling and Coles 1996: 199). These cases provide examples of what can be achieved when resources are collectively applied to the goal of order maintenance. However, *location* itself constitutes an important factor for BIDs. Approaches to confronting crime and disorder are limited to the resources available within cities and neighborhoods. Many poor inner-city entrepreneurs simply can't afford the costs to support a BID.

An alternative strategy is to displace crime and disorder through physical improvements and physical development. For example, the link between crime and disorder suggests that a useful strategy to fight crime is to "fix broken windows," remove graffiti, close rowdy bars, and so on. (Briggs and Mueller, 1997: 140). CDCs have also focused on particular micro-areas of neighborhoods such as blighted buildings or parks. These grass roots efforts have proven quite successful at mobilizing community residents around community enhancement initiatives and can contribute to a safer neighborhood environment (Briggs and Mueller 1997: 171).

Summary

This chapter has discussed *crime* and *social disorder*, and *physical disorder* , and examined how these problems threaten community security and image. It is clear that crime and disorderly behavior negatively impact urban neighborhoods, and contribute to a fear of public spaces that can erode the quality of urban life. Fear of criminal attack appears to be the most salient concern. These violent offenses include murder, rape, assault with

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[2] Typically a BID is initiated by local business owners requesting or petitioning the City to establish a BID on their behalf. The City Council can approve the BID establishment by ordinance, provided written protests are not received from business owners who will represent 50 percent or more of the total assessments to be collected.

a deadly weapon, and less violent crimes, such as robbery and mugging. If residents think violent crime is rampant, they will modify their behavior accordingly. They will use streets and public places less often, and people will avoid one another, thus weakening controls, trust and social relations.

Major barriers to inner-city neighborhood revitalization also include crime, and the fear of crime. Investments in urban neighborhoods are impeded by both the reality and perception of a lack of safety. Fear of crime creates an unwillingness to patronize inner-city establishments, restricts local hours of operation and drives away investors. When criminal activity and disorderly behavior rule the streets, they block the basic public spaces of urban neighborhoods—commercial districts, parks, train stations, sidewalks, etc.—from functioning.

Social disorders such as drug use and dealing, public drunkenness, and street harassment can also threaten community security. These problems create an urban scene where public spaces are feared and devalued by community residents. Offenses against public order will spark concern about safety and often lead people to avoid certain places. Quantitative evidence reveals disorder is highest in urban areas with low-income, high unemployment, low-education and high concentrations of minorities. Research also confirms that women and families are especially threatened by this public behavior. Disorder in public spaces undermines urban neighborhood dynamics by fostering suspicion, distrust and discouraging social relations.

Physical disorders can contribute to fear of crime and negatively impact an areas image. Neighborhoods, businesses and individuals suffer from the daily physical disorder they see around them. Community residents also suffer from the long run consequences of losing control over their environments and a sense of helplessness. Public places such as parks and shopping districts lose their appeal and are avoided. The negative impacts effect the neighborhood environment in which children are raised and can contribute to the loss of economic value in local property and community resources.

Chapter IV:
Crime, Social Disorder, Physical Disorder in the Fruitvale District

High crime rates and poor public safety images (i.e. the reality and the perception of crime) are inescapable facts that negatively impact many inner-city business districts. In a 1996 Main Street survey conducted by the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, 50 percent of survey respondents cited crime and public safety as the greatest weakness of Fruitvale "as a place for business."[1] An additional 25 percent of respondents cited offenses against public order such as drugs, alcohol, loitering and panhandling, and 22 percent reported problems associated with physical environment, especially "dirty streets" (see Figure 4.1.) Other recent studies offer similar findings.[2] In one study local businesses reported the following list of chronic problems: public drinking, urination, graffiti, prostitution, petty theft, armed robbery, auto theft, vandalism, drug dealing, loitering and pan handling. These studies accurately identify many of the recent concerns raised by merchants and neighborhood residents. Yet none of these studies provide a detailed discussion of crime and the conditions that threaten community security in the Fruitvale district. Nor do they explore the connection between crime, disorder and public safety.

To begin with, the relationship between *crime* and *public safety* is an important one. Criminal activity is indeed a significant threat to public safety in the commercial district. But what types of crime? Is the business community threatened exclusively by "serious" crimes— murder, assault with a deadly weapon, robbery, burglary (i.e. those that are most violent and detrimental to businesses)? To what extent are these serious crimes threatening public safety in the district? Are other activities (i.e. *social disorders*) such as drug use and dealing, drinking and public drunkenness, and loitering a significant threat to security? Moreover, does the neighborhood environment contribute to the perception of a lack of safety and negative community image?

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[1] Approximately 122 local businesses (60 percent of total) where surveyed in the period June-August, 1996. The survey considers conditions at that time. The question referred to above was open-ended and asked: What are the greatest weaknesses of the Fruitvale as a place for business?

[2] See the following reports for reference to crime and disorder in the district: "Fruitvale: Community Development Plan" (1990); Fruitvale Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Plan for East 14th Street (1993); Fruitvale Merchants' Association Survey Analysis (1993).

Figure 1.   Greatest Weaknesses in the Fruitvale Business District, 1996

Public Safety	Crime/Safety	**50% [1]**
Social Disorder	Problems with drugs and alcohol Loitering/Panhandling	**16%** **9%**
Physical Disorder	Dirty Streets/Cleanliness	**22%**
Other	Parking	**16%**

What are the Greatest Weaknesses of the Fruitvale as a Place for Businesses?
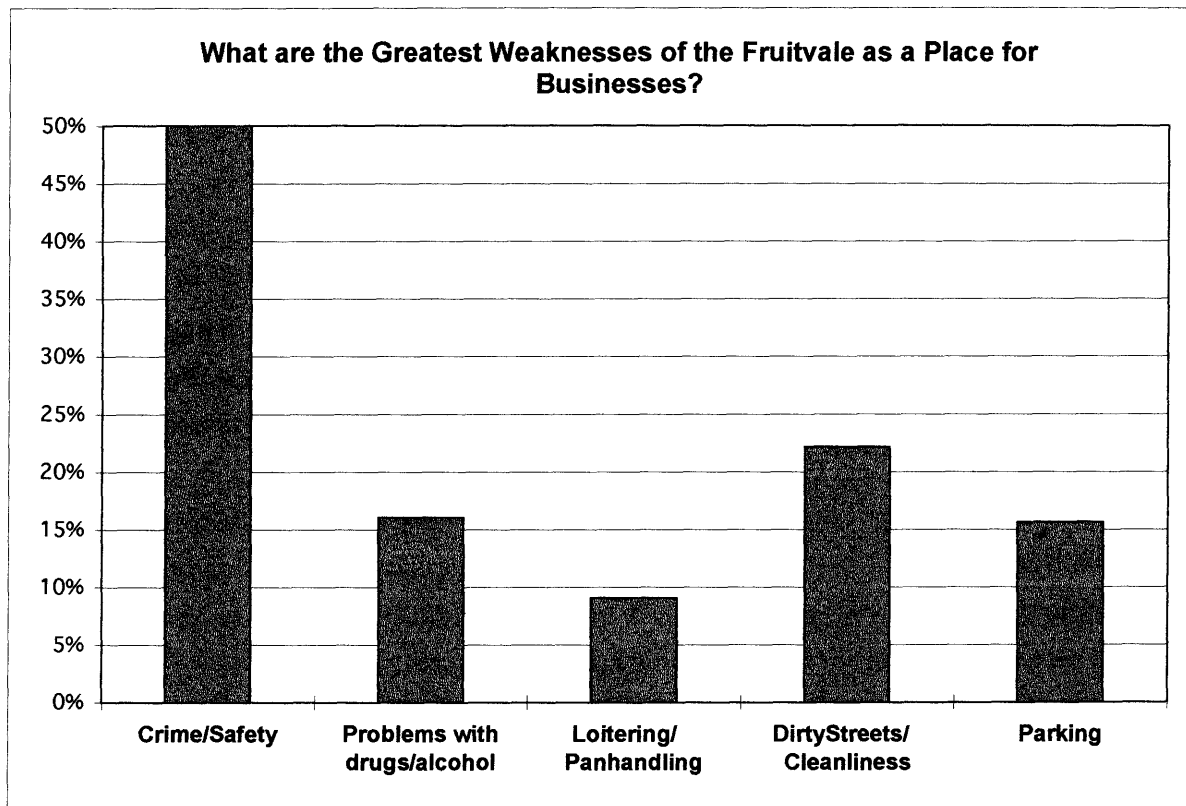
Notes:
[1]   Percentages sum to more than 100%
      because respondents gave multiple answers.
      The survey item was open-ended.

These are the concerns I will address in this chapter. The chapter considers public safety threats in the Fruitvale business district itself through the three lenses of *crime*, *social disorder*, and *physical disorder*. Efforts to address these issues and the relationship among them will be vital to restoring order and thus the success of the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative in the Fruitvale district.

Crime in the Fruitvale

In 1992, a report on housing conditions in the Fruitvale briefly identified the crime and safety issues in the "neighborhood" as follows:

> Since the late 1980s, the neighborhood has suffered from an escalating drug and gang problem which brings with it violence and assorted nuisances including speeding cars, garbage, vandalism and graffiti, noise intimidation, and parks strewn with needles, syringes and used condoms. Long time residents are increasingly trapped in their homes after dark, and several have moved to the back of their houses to avoid stray bullets. Parents fear the influences and dangers their children encounter on the street, and residents have great mistrust for each other, especially along racial lines, thereby segregating and inhibiting community life. (Bell 1992: 6)

Many, if not all of these problems which continue to negatively impact the neighborhood and business district. Of course, some problems are more severe than others. Moreover, the nature and frequency of these activities vary, depending on place and time. This section will examine the crimes which create community insecurity in the business district. My analysis will report on Oakland Police Department (OPD) crime statistics, interviews with OPD staff, a 1996 merchant survey, and individual observation. This study of the Fruitvale examines criminal offenses which directly threaten local businesses and shoppers—murder, burglary, assault, robbery, muggings and locked-auto burglary. The most violent crimes (murder and assault) are most severe and pose the greatest threat to the public. Other offenses such as burglary and robbery are less violent yet may involve the use or threat of force, and result in personal injury, property damage or personal loss (i.e. money or other valuable items). Generally speaking, these are street crimes committed by predatory criminals who murder, assault, rob, and steal.

OPD Statistics.   Like many inner-city neighborhoods, the Fruitvale is confronted with problems of murder, assault, commercial burglary, robbery and locked-auto burglary. Data for serious crimes have been broken down by police beat and provide a specific point of reference for comparing the levels of crime in the neighborhood. The commercial strip splits the neighborhood in half along the north-south axis and is centrally located between police beats 23 and 24; Fruitvale Avenue, the primary intersection, is located between police beats 19 and 23. This report will examine all three beats and refer to them collectively as the *neighborhood*[3] (see Map 4.1 and 4.2).

OPD Statistics on reported crimes indicate that between 1995 and 1996 most of the serious index crimes in the neighborhood have either decreased slightly or remained the same (See Figure 4.2). Murders dropped from 11 in 1995, to 9 in 1996. When compared to the city of Oakland, the murder rate in the Fruitvale is 2 % above the city-wide average (see Table 4.1). It is important to note that the city of Oakland has unusually high rates of murder, assault, and other serious offenses. When compared to 15 other major cities (with comparable size and geographic distribution) in 1994, Oakland ranked 3rd for homicide, and 4th for offenses against persons. Therefore, police beats with crime statistics that resemble the city-wide averages should raise concern.

Police statistics on other violent crimes are more disturbing. There is a high rate of criminal attack in the neighborhood. There were 217 assaults with a deadly weapon reported in 1995, and 196 assaults in 1996. Police statistics also indicate that the assault rate was 15 percent above the city-wide average in 1996 (see Table 4.1). The picture that emerges is one of overall high violent crime rates in the neighborhood. Thus to a certain extent, police statistics on serious crimes support the perception of the Fruitvale neighborhood as unsafe.
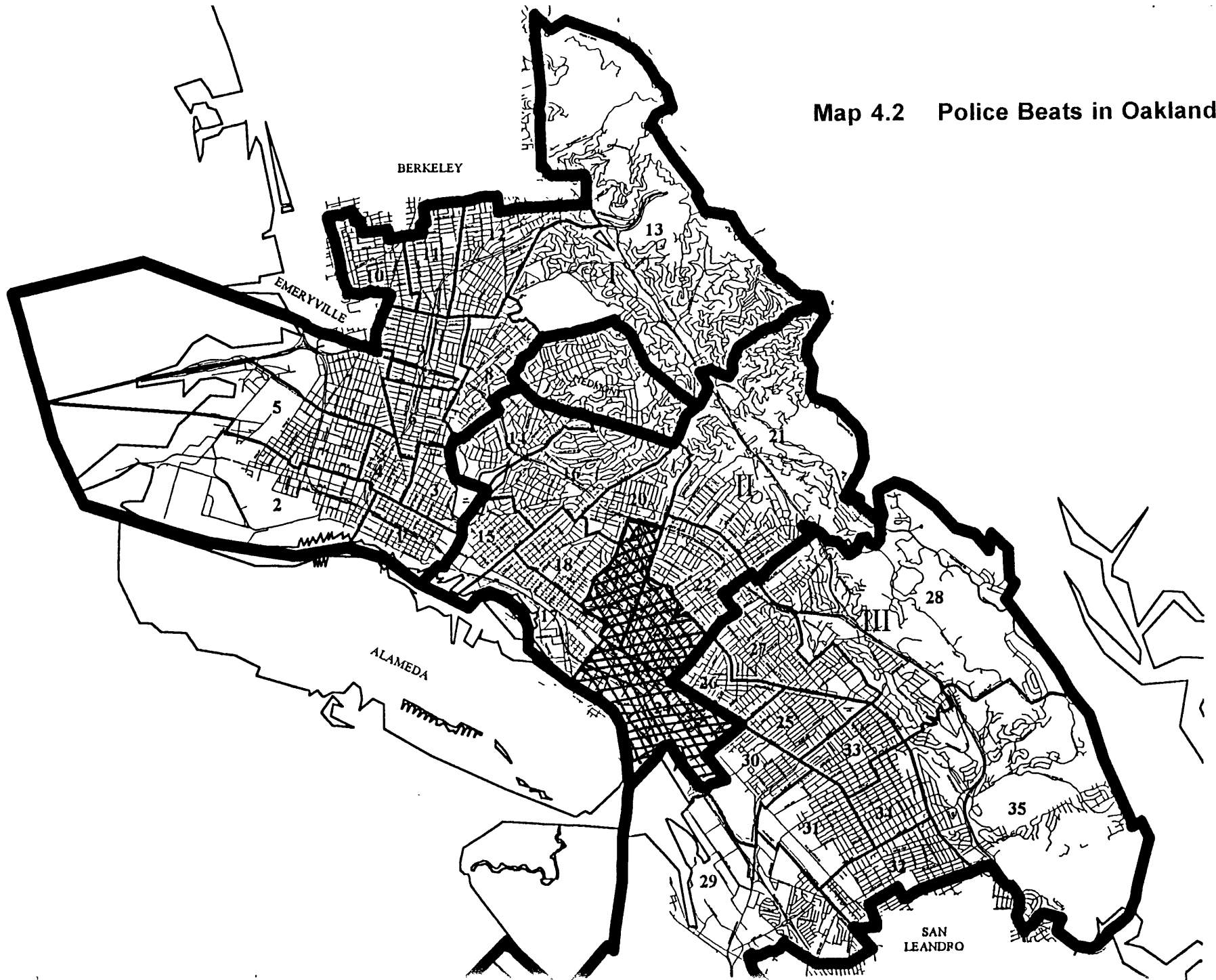
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[3] The Fruitvale Neighborhood is officially defined by nine census tracts which encompass the three police beats.
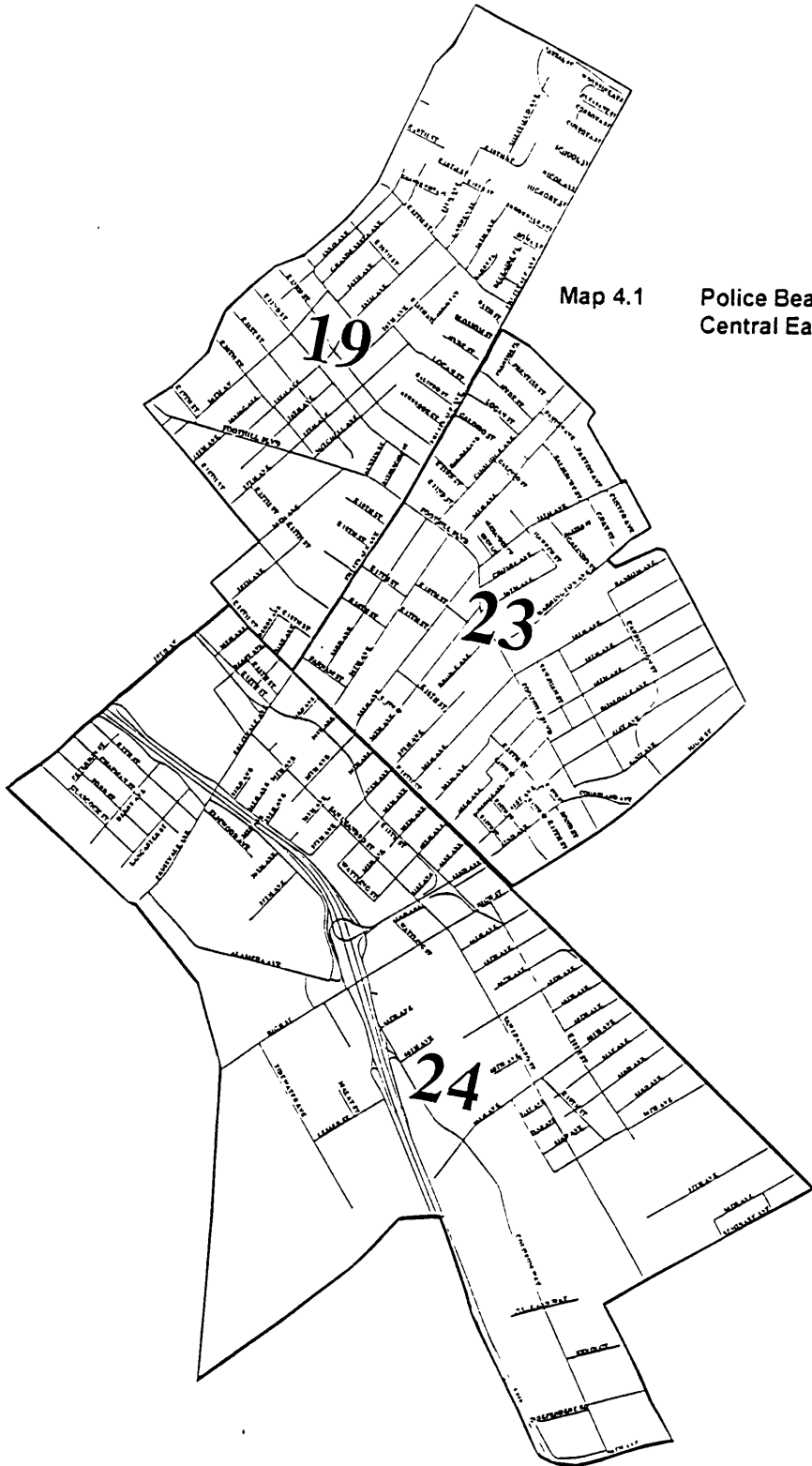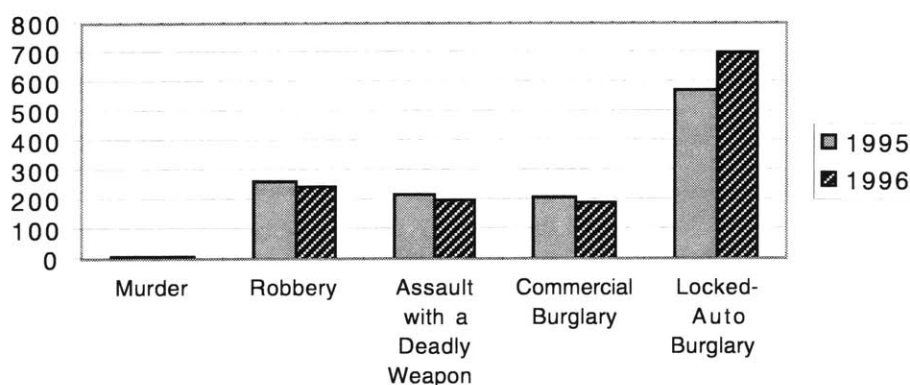
Map 4.1   Police Beats in the Fruitvale
Central East Oakland

Map 4.2   Police Beats in Oakland

Figure 4.2	1995 vs. 1996 Crime Statistics for Fruitvale		
Crime	**Total Offenses for Beats 19,23 and 24**		
	1995	1996	% Change
Murder	11	9	-18%
Robbery	264	247	-6%
Assault	217	196	-10%
Commercial Burglary	210	194	-8%
Locked-Auto Burglary	574	704	23%

1995 vs. 1996 Crime Statistics for Fruitvale

Source: Oakland Police Department, Crime Analysis Unit, 1995 and 1996

Robbery and burglary also remain a significant problem in the Fruitvale neighborhood. In 1996, there were 247 robberies (armed and strong armed). The same year there were 194 commercial burglaries. Both robberies and commercial burglaries are above the city-wide average, 25 percent and 20 percent respectively (see Table 4.1). These are high-volume predatory offenses of which merchants are most fearful. The most dramatic increase was locked-auto burglaries—up 23 percent from 1995 to 1996. These statistics would certainly be among the important reasons why investors fail to consider the Fruitvale as a place for business. As one National Institute of Justice study reports, crime and the fear of crime can influence entrepreneurs' investment decisions more than high taxes or labor costs (Stewart 1986).

Table 4.1 Oakland Police Department Crime Statistics, 1996					
Crime	Beat 19	Beat 23	Beat 24	Neighborhood Average (19, 23, 24)	City Total	City-Wide Average [1]
Murder	5	2	2	3	103	2.94
Narco (drug-related)	174	111	88	124	5,054	144
Robbery	92	90	65	82	3,135	90
Assault	77	82	37	65	1,924	55
Commercial Burglary	27	35	132	65	1,729	49
Locked-Auto Burglary	293	156	255	235	10,254	293

Notes:
[1] The city-wide average was determined by tallying
the number of occurrences yearly for a given offense
in the entire city and dividing that number by 35—the number of police beats in Oakland.
The average population of these beats is roughly equal to the city-wide average
of other beats.

Source: Oakland Police Department, Crime Analysis Unit, 1996

However, rates for serious crimes such as robbery and burglary have recently shown a slight decrease. This is encouraging given that a recent Fruitvale survey report (Popovic 1993) had revealed an increase in armed robberies in the commercial area. Police records indicate a 6 percent decrease in robberies (armed and strong armed) and 8 percent decrease in commercial burglaries from 1995 to 1996 (See Figure 4.2).

Surveys results and public safety. In 1996, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council conducted a survey of merchants and property owners in Fruitvale commercial district.[4] An important, common finding in the survey is that *crime* was viewed as the greatest threat to the Fruitvale business district. Half (50%) of the merchants and property owners reported that the greatest weaknesses of the Fruitvale as a place for business was crime and safety.[5] In a separate question, 11 percent of the respondents reported

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[4] The survey, intended to assist with the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative, was carried out in the period June-August, 1996. Approximately 122 local businesses (60 percent of total) reported on a broad scope of issues. The survey considers conditions at that time.

[5] The question referred to above was open-ended and asked: What are the greatest weaknesses of the Fruitvale as a place for business? However, this question does not reveal information about the nature of the crime problem. For example, crime can have a dual meaning: merchants have also used this term when referring to social disorders.

safety in the district as unacceptable and 40 percent as poor. Survey respondents appeared more concerned about crime; that is 24 percent reported crime as unacceptable and 45 percent reported poor.[6]

More specifically, 16 percent said that the greatest weakness for business was problems with drugs and alcohol, and 9 percent reported loitering and panhandling. In other words, 25 percent of the businesses reported social disorders as serious problems. It is important to underline that these questions were open-ended which reveals that offenses against public order are indeed significant concerns which negatively impact the district. Most respondents referred to problems in the streets, not in the stores and that street crime and disorder had negatively impacted the area. Petty theft was also a concern for some merchants. It is important to note that the respondents were often apprehensive about rating the Fruitvale, especially if the response could be interpreted negatively. That is, merchants and property owners were reluctant to answer questions that could contribute to the negative images and perceptions that currently plague area. As a result, it is likely that concerns such as crime and safety may represent greater problems than revealed in the survey.

One crime generally not reported by 1996 Main Street survey respondents is street muggings. Muggings usually involve a weapon (gun or knife) which is used in a threatening manner to demand money or other valuable items. Victims are normally left unharmed as long as they cooperate. Most muggings go unreported due to the unlikelihood of apprehending the culprit. Therefore, the nature of this offense is unclear and difficult to examine. Nevertheless, muggings are serious crimes which need to be addressed.

Social Disorder in the Fruitvale

It is clear that the perceived crime and safety problem in the Fruitvale is linked to offenses separate from serious crimes. As offenses against public order, social disorders negatively impact the commercial district and threaten the security of merchants, community residents and shoppers. In the 1996 Main Street survey, the following were the most frequently cited social disorders in the Fruitvale district: 1) drug

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[6] The question referred to above asked: How would you rate the Fruitvale on Crime? The respondents were asked to choose one of the following answers: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor and Unacceptable.

use and dealing; 2) public drinking and lounging drunks; 3) panhandling and loitering; and 4) street prostitution; and (5) bars and social disorder.

Drug use and dealing. Among the various social disorders in the Fruitvale district, local law enforcement staff point to drug use and dealing as the biggest problem in the Fruitvale. The local police beat officer stated that drug use and dealing in the Fruitvale is concentrated near the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station and Sanborn Park.[7] These "hot spots" will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Although drug use is not a serious problem in the commercial corridor, drug dealing and related activities are a common concern among merchants and property owners. Approximately 16 percent of 1996 Main Street survey respondents reported drugs and alcohol as the greatest weakness for local business. It appears that the greatest contributing factor to the drug dealing problem in the business district is the large number of on-street public telephones. Some sections of the district have up to five telephones on a single block. According to the local foot patrol officer, these phones are placed in front of businesses and are often used by "dope fiends" to arrange drug deals. The telephones are designed not to accept in-coming calls, but this feature has little, if no effect on deterring drug dealers from using on-street phones.

It has also been raised that the telephone companies themselves are engaging in illegal activity around installation practices. To install an on-street public telephone, phone companies are required to obtain an encroachment permit from the City. However, many companies avoid this requirement by installing telephones at night. In exchange for granting permission to install the telephones, local businesses receive a percentage of the profits generated. As a result, the commercial center is lined with an excessive number of public phones which contribute to the drug-dealing problem.[8]

Because the drug problem is not as severe as in the eastern-most part of the city, the Fruitvale receives less attention from the police department. The major center for drug dealing is located only a few miles east, and is often called "the worst section in the whole city." The Oakland Police Department (OPD) recently received a $300,000

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[7] Rudy Villegas, telephone interview with author. March 17, 1997. It should be noted that this foot patrol officer was raised in the Fruitvale and has been patrolling the neighborhood for the past eight years.
[8] Rudy Villegas, telephone interview with author. March 17, 1997.

federal grant for a task force to fight drugs and crime in beats 30 and 31 and five officers have been assigned to this area. In contrast, the Fruitvale district has one foot patrol officer. This greatly restricts the ability of the OPD to fight the drug problem.

Latino gangs in the Fruitvale neighborhood are well-known for selling drugs in the Fruitvale.[9] They also have a reputation for their violent behavior, especially against rival local gangs. The beat officer noted that these gangs have a long history in the community, but their activity is not known for causing problems in commercial area.

Oakland Police Department statistics on narcotic arrests indicate that the Fruitvale neighborhood is 14 percent below the city-wide average. Given that the city of Oakland has a severe problem with drugs, these figures are not necessarily positive and should not be interpreted as a good sign. In 1996 there were 199 narcotic-related arrests in police beats 23 and 24.[10] Police beat number 19 (where Sanborn Park is located) has the highest rate of narcotic arrests, which is 21 percent above the city-wide average.

Public drinking and lounging drunks. Public drinking and drunkenness in the streets remains a concern among merchants and property owners in the Fruitvale district. As mentioned earlier, approximately 16 percent of 1996 Main Street survey respondents reported drugs and alcohol as the greatest weakness for local businesses.[11] According to the foot patrol officer, public drunks are also one of the greatest threats to pedestrians and shoppers. He explains that this is especially damaging to the Mexican restaurants in the area, which are very popular and attract a large amounts of people from the downtown area, especially during lunch hours.

Drunks can be seen hanging around on the sidewalks and in public spaces. For example, on the corner of 35th Avenue and East 14th Street is the largest public space in the commercial corridor. It abuts an abandoned building and on the site are benches, trees and the only mural located in the commercial center. This public space has great potential as a mini park or rest area but is poorly utilized by pedestrians and shoppers.

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[9] Rudy Villegas, telephone interview with author. March 17, 1997.
[10] Both beats are in the heart of the Fruitvale neighborhood, and represent the entire commercial district.
[11] The question referred to above was open-ended and asked: What are the greatest weaknesses of the Fruitvale as a place for business?

Merchants in this section of the district explain that it is often used as a resting area by drunks and the homeless.[12] They consider this to be a big problem because people who use the space often engage in unsightly behavior such as public urination. This behavior is a deterrent for shoppers and residents alike, and suggests that the commercial corridor is governed by an unreliable social order. Parents and their children are especially offended. Consequently some shoppers avoid the area, thus hurting the neighboring businesses.

Public drunkenness is a misdemeanor. Offenders are cited under a variety of offenses covering vagrancy, loitering, disorderly conduct and so forth. It appears that the local beat officer is active at regulating this behavior and frequently cites people for public such offenses.

Loitering and Pan Handling. Loitering poses a serious and complex problem in the Fruitvale. A Unity Council staff member provides a general description of the nature of the loitering problem in the Fruitvale:

> ...the first problem is perception, and the reason we have such a problem is that we have a lot of people hanging out, that aren't doing anything, that aren't working, they don't look well-kept...A lot of these people aren't equipped to have jobs...and a lot of these folks are hanging out in the Fruitvale [because] there are a lot of services that attract them...[and]...there is a lot of staring and watching of people. I think that makes a lot of people uncomfortable. I don't know how you work on that. I think that one way of working on that is to bring more people that aren't like that into the neighborhood, so that folks don't stand out as much. They are always going to be here; they are in every neighborhood. But if there is a lot of people around you don't feel threatened. [13]

Loitering in front of check cashing stores during pay periods has been a concern for residents and merchants. Merchants as well as the local beat officer have pointed to check cashing stores as "bringing in the wrong kinds of people." In part, this refers to the fact that food stamps are illegally traded for cash and these transactions often occur

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[12] According to the police beat officer, approximately half of the drunks are homeless and the others are local residents.

[13] Name withheld, telephone interview with author. March, 27, 1997.

in front of check cashing stores. Also, large groups of people gather in front of these stores, either waiting to enter the store, or what appears to be just "hanging out."

Loitering occurs throughout the district and in front of places such as bus stops, street corners, and liquor stores. Groups of people also form long lines in front a popular bank teller machine.[14] However, the extent to which loitering threatens shoppers and pedestrians is unclear. This potential problem should be further investigated to determine whether it poses a threat, and if so, which aspects are threatening. It may result that loitering is too vague to address. As mentioned earlier, many of the local residents that shop or "hang out" in the Fruitvale district are low-income, and some are homeless. As a result, some pedestrians may not appear "well-kept," which can make certain shoppers or pedestrians uncomfortable.

Perhaps the most serious concern intimately linked to the problem of loitering is street harassment. The primary victims of street harassment in the Fruitvale are women, especially young women and teenage girls. Local residents report that offensive street encounters involve whistles, catcalls, lewd comments and other forms of harassment. Often, these comments are made from cars passing by on the street. But verbal harassment also occurs on the streets of the business district. Equally offensive is the hard starring and "up-and-down" examination of women and teenage girls as they pass by people.

The victims of this offensive behavior consequently feel unsafe, and even violated. Indeed, street harassment can lead their victims to avoid shopping or visiting certain areas. These confrontations can reshape important aspects of people's daily lives. For example, fearful of street harassment, women and girls will drive rather than walk, and visit the district only with groups of people or a male escort.

Pan handling in the Fruitvale is not as severe as in other parts of the city, especially downtown. Conversations with the local beat cop revealed that this problem has not contributed much to the downturn of shoppers in the district. For the most part it is rare to see panhandlers stationing themselves in front of banks, bus stops, automated teller machines and parking lots.

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[14] Only one 24 hour, on-street teller machine exists in the entire Fruitvale business district.

Prostitution. The Fruitvale business district is located directly between the most active prostitution areas in the city. In general, prostitution is concentrated east of downtown, along busy arterial streets (such as International Boulevard), in poorer areas, and there it becomes a disorder problem. On occasion, prostitutes are seen during the afternoon and early evening hours walking through the Fruitvale commercial district. It appears that they are passing by and not "looking for business" or waving in friendly fashion at passing cars. In general, prostitution seems to pose little threat and is not a disorder problem in the Fruitvale commercial district. Moreover, street prostitution is not among the most highly rated concerns in the 1996 Main Street survey.

Prostitution was a problem in the Fruitvale district only recently, and concentrated on sectors of East 12th Street and the corner of 35th Avenue and East 14th. It appears that merchants have been successful at reducing the prostitution trade in the shopping center.[15] Today, prostitution "hot spots" are east of downtown, and during evening hours. Specifically, east of Lake Merritt to 29th Street (i.e. New China Town) and east of High Street.[16] Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that prostitution is very active in outlying areas of the commercial corridor. It would not come as a surprise if this problem were to begin spilling over into the Fruitvale district. Therefore, efforts to maintain the district as a place free of prostitution should continue. Otherwise, the shopping center risks facing the prostitution problem once again.

Bars and social disorder.   During the 1980s and early 1990s, the Fruitvale district had a number of bars and liquor stores which were attracting crime and disorder. The problems associated with these businesses raised concerns for merchants and residents alike. One local resident described the nature of the problem as follows:

> Every day, when I take my children to the library, we pass by liquor stores where people are using drugs, urinating or fighting...It's not right...Why are such places allowed to operate? (see Vasquez).

One bar in particular, Ye Olde Inn, became the topic of a major controversy. Between 1992 and 1994, the bar and its immediate surroundings were the site of 69 drug and vice arrests. Residents also revealed that they were afraid walking in the area (see Chamey, November 9, 1994). Complaints regarding Ye Olde Inn began in 1990, and

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[15] See Popovic 1993.

included problems of drug dealing, fighting and prostitution, both inside and outside the bar. The bar was well-known in the area for being a drug dealing center, especially heroin. These problems continued and were not challenged until a bartender was shot to death inside the bar on July 19, 1994. This event sent shock waves throughout the district and community groups were outraged, but the bar remained open.

Alcohol and drug-related community problems had grown so bad that in November 1994 Fruitvale residents got the attention of the state's top alcohol enforcement official and took him on a tour of the district's most troubled spots. Jay R. Stroh, director of the state department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC), spent several hours driving through the district and examining the problems associated with bars and liquor stores. Afterwards, Stroh briefly commented on his impression of the business district's conditions:

> There are obviously a lot of problems in this community...We saw a dope deal go down right across the street from one of the liquor stores we visited...That's why we are here, to work with the community..."(see Vasquez).

Shortly after the visit from ABC officials, Ye Old Inn was closed.[17] It was the first bar to be "forced closed" with the help of a new state law. The city was successful at enacting a California law that gives alcohol beverage control agents additional powers to close "troubled spots" (see Chamy, November 9, 1994).

Stroh explains that drug deals and other problems often occur near liquor establishments. He conveyed that his office, which oversees the licensing of all liquor retailers in the state, is concerned, but it is often difficult to prove that a link exists between the stores and drugs dealers. However, the state of California will hold off from issuing beer and wine licenses to Oakland liquor stores and bars through 1997. This has resulted because Oakland is one of several cities subject to moratorium (See Vasquez).

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[16] Rudy Villegas, telephone interview with author. March 17, 1997.
[17] The Fruitvale Community Collaborative was instrumental in applying the required pressure on the ABC to close the bar; over 140 residents sent letters and petitions to ABC officials requesting that the Bar be shut down. (see Chamy, November 15, 1994).

Today, Ye Old Inn, at the intersection of 35th Avenue and East 14th Street, remains vacant and an eye sore. Nevertheless, the successful closing of the bar removed the most dangerous "business activity" in the commercial center. Today, the Fruitvale district currently has a total of three bars, down from seven several years ago.[18]

Physical Disorder in the Fruitvale

In the 1996 Main Street survey, merchants and property owners indicated that the third greatest concern was the district's physical environment, with 22 percent of respondents reporting the need for "cleaner streets."[19] "Cleaner streets" can also a dual meaning: merchants have used this term when referring to getting rid of social disorder and crime. The idea is that the poor physical appearance of the streets may create conditions in which real crime and disorder can flourish.

Interviews with residents and unity council staff also indicate that the area needs substantial physical upgrading and improved sanitation on order to make it more appealing. Graffiti is a problem that marks many businesses and walls with paint. The only mural in the commercial strip (located on the corner of 35th Avenue and East 14th Street) is marked with graffiti. Murals in neighboring sections of the district suffer from the same problem. These murals are also the key symbols of the Latino heritage, culture, pride and strong presence in the Fruitvale. Graffiti has also cause incredible amounts of damage in repair costs. As one merchant explains:

> The biggest problem dollar wise that [is affecting the Fruitdistrict] right now is the graffiti problem and etching in windows...We have dealerships [automobile] there [the Fruitvale district] that have virtually tens of thousands of dollars in windows [repair expenses] and they're thinking of leaving the area cause the police department is after the hard crime...and that so-called soft crime...they don't have the time to do it.[20]

In another question, 33 percent of survey respondents reported that attractiveness in the district as poor, and 42 percent responded fair. For those who drive to the

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[18] Rudy Villegas, telephone interview with author. March 17, 1997.
[19] The question referred to above was open-ended and asked: What are the greatest weaknesses of the Fruitvale as a place for business?
[20] Clyde Brewster, telephone interview with author. Oakland, May 5, 1997.

commercial area and for the pedestrian, the district is an urban scene with starkly contrasting images. The district has a unique character with distinctive architectural buildings, culturally diverse shops and restaurants, many of which have gone through recent facade improvements. In contrast, streets and sidewalks can be unattractive due to dirt, litter and overflowing trash receptacles.

Shoppers and merchants often complain about the poor physical conditions on the streets. On some occasions, furniture or piles of garbage can be found on the sidewalks. Merchants complain that this problem can even block the sidewalks from functioning. It appears that neither the street nor the sidewalk have been properly maintained by the City of Oakland. It is clear that without an attractive street which welcomes the shopper, the commercial district may never reach its full potential.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how crime, social disorder and physical disorder negatively impact public places and undermine urban neighborhood dynamics. An examination of the Fruitvale District through the three lenses of crime, social disorder, and physical disorder revealed that this area is confronted with all of these problems.

First, Oakland police statistics on serious index crimes indicate that the Fruitvale neighborhood has a significant crime problem. The crimes which pose the greatest threat to security and a healthy business climate are assaults with a deadly weapon, robbery, commercial burglary and locked-auto burglary. These crimes are above the city-wide average, and 1996 Main Street survey results confirm that these problems need to be addressed. Mugging also tends to be overlooked and police statistics fail to reveal the nature of this problem for reasons mentioned earlier.

Second, it is clear that disorderly behavior in the commercial district threatens community security, leads people away from certain areas, creates devalued public spaces, and reinforces the perception that the area is unsafe and "out of control." The biggest threats appear to be drug dealing, street harassment (especially of women), public drinking and drunkenness, and loitering. It also appears that the drug problem is heightened from the excessive number of public phones on every street corner. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Fruitvale BART station has a bigger problem

with drugs (and other disorders) which generates negative "spillover" effects onto the district.

Problems with drugs and alcohol in the Fruitvale District were quite severe several years ago. There is no question that rowdy bars in the district once contributed to many problems, including public drinking and drunkenness. The Fruitvale Community Collaborative was very successful at closing down a troublesome bar. This victory has greatly improved conditions and removed other problems such as drugs, violence and prostitution. Nevertheless, drunks are often seen lounging in different parts of the district and their presence can be intimidating.

Loitering is also a concern in the business district and is linked to the homelessness problem. This is an inescapable fact in many parts of the neighborhood, and difficult to control. The extent to which pedestrians and shoppers are threatened by loitering remains unclear. In addition, the Fruitvale district attracts a lot of people because of its great offerings in social services and inexpensive retail goods. These people have a right to take advantage of the services provided by various non-profit organizations, and to shop. At the same time, problems of street harassment, public urination and other offensive behavior need to be addresses. Merchants also consider loitering a problem and complain that it negatively impacts the local business climate.

Most social disorders are classified by law enforcement officials as misdemeanors or petty offenses under state law and city ordinance; the punishment for these behaviors is normally some type of fine or community service. These activities are not criminal in any serious sense, but they breed a fear of the public places that can, if unchecked, reduce the extent to which the public will feel safe, and assert their right to be left in peace.

Physical conditions in the Fruitvale district are major concern for merchants and neighborhood residents. The district is blighted by several vacant properties, poorly maintained storefronts, and streets filled with litter, trash and overflowing trash receptacles.[21] On the corner of 35th Avenue and East 14th Street is the only mural on the commercial strip, and the strongest symbol of the Latino heritage, culture and presence in the Fruitvale. The area is rarely used by shoppers and pedestrians, and has become a haven for drunks and disorderly behavior. The mural also suffers from graffiti, fading colors, which contributes to a poor district image. Clearly, this space has great potential, and community enhancement efforts should focus on making the necessary improvements to return an element of public art to the district.

Physical disorders negatively impact the image of the district, and it is clear that physical revitalization will help to achieve both business development and community enhancement objectives. An improved physical appearance will assist in attracting more shoppers and generate economic activity within the district. An attractive district environment which capitalizes on cultural elements will also strengthen community identity and pride.

In short, crime, social disorder, and physical disorder contribute to neighborhood decline, fear, and the perception of a lack of safety in the Fruitvale District. Neighborhood commercial revitalization programs need to identify and confront both dimensions of the crime problem—crime and social disorder. Otherwise, potential shoppers, employees, and investors will continue to avoid inner-city business districts (such as the Fruitvale) that appear to be unsafe. Physical disorders also contribute to an atmosphere of urban decay and aggressive attempts should be made to the neighborhood environment. The synergy created when these three elements are employed collectively can greatly enhance community security efforts.

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[21] It is important to note that the Spanish Speaking Unity Council is managing a facade improvement program which has been quite successful at improving the appearance of many store fronts and creating an aesthetically pleasing physical environment (see Appendix A).

Chapter V :
The Revitalization of the Fruitvale BART Station and Sanborn Park

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, no issue is more important to attracting people to inner-city commercial districts, and other public places, than public safety. It is clear that efforts to address the issue of safety in the Fruitvale district will be vital to the success of the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative (NMSI). However, to better understand the security problem in the Fruitvale commercial district, an additional factor needs to be considered. The commercial corridor is located between two neighborhood "hot spots"—the BART station and Sanborn Park— where crime and disorder are concentrated. The problems in these public places must addressed to protect the commercial district from negative "spillover" effects. The two troublesome "hot spots" at both ends of the district are also the target of two initiatives which are attempting to revitalize sections of the Fruitvale:

- The **Fruitvale BART Transit Village Initiative (FBTVI)**, a large-scale development project around the local Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station; and

- The **Fruitvale Open Space Initiative (FOSI)**, which will redesign and reconstruct Sanborn Park, located in the heart of the Fruitvale.

It is clear that the BART station and Sanborn Park suffer from crime and offenses against public order. This fact introduces an important spatial element to the nature of the crime problem in the Fruitvale. Initiatives to revitalize these two areas and improve public safety will be key factor in the success of the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative for several reasons. Firstly, the two initiatives (i.e. the Transit Village and Sanborn Park) share an important and common concern: public safety. Secondly, the commercial district, the BART station, and the park are notable landmarks and valued community resources. Finally, the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative, the Fruitvale BART Transit Village Initiative and the Fruitvale Open Space Initiative are mutually interdependent, and together can provide a viable urban core.

This chapter first examines the Fruitvale BART Transit Initiative, with special attention to issues of public safety. The chapter then discusses the revitalization of Sanborn Park, and the factors which threaten security at the site. I will also look at the extent to which both areas are linked to the commercial district and the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative. Consideration of these two "hot spots" provides a deeper understanding of the threats to security in and around the commercial center.

Fruitvale BART Transit Village Initiative (FBTVI)

The Background. The Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) train, completed in 1972, is a 71-mile transportation system which spans three Bay Area counties—San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa. At that the time of its opening, planners hoped that BART would replace the automobile as the preferred choice of travel. Planners had also expected that this "modern-era rail system" would assist is guiding future population and employment growth in the Bay Area. As Bernick and Cervero (1997) explain:

> BART was expected to strengthen the Bay Area's urban centers while guiding suburban growth along radial corridors, leading to a star-shaped, multi-centered metropolitan form. The entire BART project was premised on the basis that it would eventually lead to mini-communities mushrooming around suburban rail stations (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 164).

Unfortunately, BART failed to accomplishing several of its goals. First, it did little to create new growth. Instead, it redistributed growth that "would have taken place even without a rail investment" (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 164). Second, BART "failed to attract high-density housing around stations." Perhaps the "greatest disappointment is that stations in low-income communities have not experienced the growth and investment of other areas, especially downtown locations such as San Francisco (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 164-167). For example, "little has changed" around the Richmond station in the last 20 years, and local problems create significant barriers to development. As Bernick and Cervero explain:

> A depressed local economy, urban blight, and increased crime have suppressed development. Richmond's experiences underscore the fact that opening a rail station, in and of itself, will not stimulate major land-use changes unless there

are reasonably favorable local market conditions (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 174).

These factors have "supressed development" at stations in other inner-city locations as well. The Fruitvale station in East Oakland suffers from local conditions similar to Richmond, such as a depressed local economy which has a profound and far-reaching effect on the area. Bernick and Cervero provide a general commentary on what these inner city neighborhood stations have in common:

> Although many inner-city neighborhoods, like Fruitvale, enjoy good regional accessibility, by virtue of their rail stops [BART], too many lack decent, affordable housing, job opportunities, good schools, and neighborhood security (Bernick and Cervero 1997: 10).

Although these problems pose major challenges to revitalizing inner-city BART stations, Cervero and other planners believe that it can successfully happen. Bernick and Cervero list the following elements as vital to long-term success of a transit village:

- Enhanced mobility and environment;
- Pedestrian friendliness;
- Alternative suburban living and working environments;
- Neighborhood revitalization;
- Public safety; and
- Public revitalization (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 7).

Among the important elements for transit villages in the inner-city, neighborhood revitalization and public safety seem particularly salient. As Bernick and Cervero note:

The inner-city transit village builds on the value that the train station brings both office and retail activities in the form of increased walk-on traffic. It also builds on the value added from creating a neighborhood where there is a 24 h per day presence of homeowners and a centrally located police substation (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 7).

This general commentary echoes some earlier ideas, including Jane Jacobs' (1961) observations about the importance of "eyes on the street," and Oscar Newman's (1972) belief that physical environment can be designed in a manner which enhances resident

security.   The dedication of space for a police substation is also a key component in providing greater community security. As will be discussed in a moment, the Fruitvale BART Transit Village Initiative envisions having many of these features.

The Fruitvale Bart Transit Village Initiative.   For over 20 years, the Fruitvale BART station and commercial district have experienced major disinvestment. Private investors have chosen to put their money elsewhere, and public agencies have focused their efforts on improving downtown and the waterfront. However, over the past several years, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council (SSUC), a community development with a 21 year history, has made tremendous progress in planning a large-scale development project around the local BART station.

The Fruitvale BART transit village will offer an innovative and integrated approach to commercial revitalization and economic development in the community. The plan is to construct a public pedestrian plaza which will connect the BART station to the commercial district located on East 14th Street. The development costs are estimated to be $100,000,000, and the project is expected to increase both BART and bus ridership, as well as concentrate retail and social services in an easily accessible community center. The transit village will fill between 13 to 15 acres of land, and the core of the project includes the following:

- 68 units of elderly housing;
- a child care center;
- a senior care center;
- health care services for low-income families;
- new commercial/retail space;
- office space;
- and a BART replacement parking structure just off the pedestrian plaza;
- intermodal bus transfer facility.

Planners of the Transit Village (which incorporates "new urbanist" design principles) assert that the project will bring important benefits that go beyond the immediate site.[1] For example, an important feature of the Transit Village is to have an open-air mercado

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[1] New urbanists are well-known for their critiques of America's auto-oriented post-war suburbs, and propose alternative urban design elements that incorporate walkable, compact, and mixed-use communities (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 206).

that will attract people from the surrounding community. This public plaza design feature of the project is "intended to promote foot traffic between BART and East 14th Street" (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 209). The increased foot traffic will provide an important link between the Transit Village project and the Main Street program, which will enhance and strengthen efforts to revitalize the commercial district. According to a Unity Council planner, the Main Street program and the Transit Village project "go hand in hand." He describes the relationship between both revitalization efforts as follows:

> In the last two years there have been two 150,000 sf developments ["big box" retailers] in the [Fruitvale] area...what we think our project [the Transit Village] will do is increase the visibility of East 14th Street for people passing by on BART...one of the nice things about BART is that it brings a lot of high income folks into the Fruitvale neighborhood[2]...and we think that if we build our transit village, and people start to feel more comfortable, they may start taking advantage of what exists in the Fruitvale...and so we believe the connection will wind up helping to create a really unique shopping district...Our job is to strengthen the retail district in East 14th Street, and the way to strengthen it is to use the pedestrian plaza for events, for activities, for the types of open air, outdoor stuff that attracts crowds.[3]

The hope is that the BART project and related activities will also leverage new retail activity and boost investment into the local economy. The majority of BART patrons surveyed live near the station area.[4] It appears that most of these people shop or carry out other business regularly in the commercial center. Shopping trips to and from work may be convenient not only for local BART riders, but also for other BART commuters. This unique shopping opportunity may be especially attractive for BART patrons that live in suburban or white communities where ethnic specialty foods and goods are rare or nonexistent. The ability to attract people to the transit village will depend on the

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[2] BART riders have an income profile close to that of the State as whole, and their expenditure potential is significantly higher that Fruitvale residents (Keyser Marston Associates 1994: 62).

[3] Chris Hudson, telephone interview with author. March, 27, 1997.

[4] A shopper intercept survey was administered by a private consultant over a four week period in the immediate vicinity of the Fruitvale BART station. The survey was administered in English and Spanish, and was designed to determine the degree to which BART users patronize the district's retail outlets. Approximately 11,300 people use the Fruitvale BART station daily, and roughly 28 percent of these BART patrons are neighborhood residents (Keyser Marston Associates 1994: 62)

extent to which the station can be made more secure. As Cervero notes: "No issue is more important to attracting people to transit villages than public safety" (Bernick and Cervero, 1997: 10).

Crime, Disorder and Public Safety. Security is vital to the success of to the Transit Village and perhaps the most pressing issue at the Fruitvale BART station. The greatest threat to public safety at the station is drug use and dealing, but the station is also impacted other forms of crime and social. The local foot patrol officer (for the Fruitvale business district) has repeatedly pointed to the BART station as one of the "hot spots" for criminal activity in the Fruitvale, and a breeding ground for drug use and dealing. BART police also consider the Fruitvale BART station as one of the most disorderly and crime infested areas in the entire Bay Area. As one BART police officer notes:

> It [the Fruitvale BART station] is probably regarded as one of the more active alcohol usage which is going to account for a certain amount of anti-social behavior, people not acting properly is public...[5]

Security at the station is also viewed as problem by many merchants and community residents. One reason is that the BART is not assigned a full-time police officer. As one BART officer explains:

> We are a 24 hour full-service police department, same as a municipal police department. Imagine BART as a city that has a quarter million people moving through it on a daily basis, and it has about a 160 man police department that's just like a city police department...The Fruitvale is on a beat that is staffed by at least one officer but he has to divide his time between that station and one or two others depending on the time of day...

The main complaint by residents and merchants is that police security is simply not around on a consistent basis, especially in the evening. This only contributes to the drug problem in and around the station.

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[5] Rich Bentley, telephone interview with author. April 29, 1997.

A unity council staff member describes the nature of the drug problem at the station as follows:

> ...the biggest problem in the Fruitvale commercial district is drug use...drug use that occurs just off the BART station area and it's because there is nobody there in the evening...our thesis is that by bringing this development down there, by putting in security and just doing a lot of what they call defensible space type issues...get a lot of eyes on the street, there's really no place to hide. We think we can resolve a lot of the safety issues just from design.[6]

In 1996 there were 11 robberies, 2 aggravated assaults, 111 auto-related thefts, 101 public drinking violations and 17 narcotic-related offenses. It is important to underline that the drug problem has been known to spill over into the commercial district as well. This fact provides further evidence that the drug problem has a spatial orientation which links the commercial district and the BART station together. The spatial dynamic reveals an important symbiotic relationship which cannot be overlooked. In other words, the success of revitalizing each location hinges upon the ability of the commercial district and the BART station to address the drug problem in collaboration. If either project fails at making their respective public spaces safe and secure, the results could negatively impact the entire neighborhood.

The Fruitvale BART station is also perceived as unsafe place because it is often empty at night; moreover, design elements such as vast parking lots, vacant lots, and unoccupied buildings invite crime and offenses against public disorder. The BART Transit Village will consider several approaches in making the station more secure. Firstly, "defensible space theory" will play an important role in addressing public safety concerns. The main idea is to apply Newman's (1972) theory, and design a physical environment which creates a sense of openness and safety, thereby discouraging criminal activity. Planners of the project will ensure that the parking garages are well lit, and free of dark places. Elevators and stair cases will be designed in a manner which maximizes visibility from various angles, and faces the pedestrian plaza. Moreover, security cameras will also be installed to monitor activity throughout the parking structure.

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[6] Chris Hudson, telephone interview with author. March, 27, 1997.

Another public safety measure will be the provision of private security. Security guards will be hired for the opening of the project to provide an inviting urban environment and to ensure that everyone in the pedestrian plaza will feel safe and secure. Although it has not been determined how many guards will be hired, the costs will be significant. As a result, the plan is to eventually "phase out" the private security. The hope is that by then, the residents living in the plaza will become the eyes of the "village community" 24 hours a day.

The BART Transit Village project is also considering building a police substation. This is "a common feature in many transit village plans, [and] can further enhance public security and safety" (Bernick and Cervero 1997: 11). This observation seems particularly important, if not essential, to increasing community security in and around the station area. This is key element to the plan not only because of the high crime rates in the area, but also because the police sub-station could provide an important link to the commercial district and help form a lasting partnership to address issues of crime and fear in both places.

Planners of the transit village project recognize the importance of a sub-station and are hopeful that they can dedicate some space for this type of use. As a Unity Council planner noted:

> I would say that we are going to do a [police] sub-station of some kind. There is no doubt that we will get some sort of place for the beat cops, the BART cops, and everyone to stop, and give that presence...police sub-stations are essentially symbols...so they are easy to put together. That will provide a sense of safety...So we will provide a small space for police to stop in.[7]

Use of Police Substation Space. The dedication of some space will be an important element to enhancing security measures in the area. How to utilize the space in a police sub-station is also an important consideration. Does the OPD have the staff and resources to make effective use of the space? Should the sub-station be used as a citizen's crime watch program organized by volunteers from the community?

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[7] Chris Hudson, telephone interview with author. March 27, 1997.

These considerations for a sub-station raise some important questions about the extent to which the SSUC and merchants can get involved in crime prevention programs, and develop partnerships with the BART Police Department and the OPD. Such collaborative action can develop new approaches to monitoring crime and disorder, and can achieve a synergy which will strengthen their ability to address neighborhood problems. These partnerships can also assist in developing a shared vision of what constitutes a safe urban environment for the central core of the Fruitvale community. Moreover, organizing these two revitalization efforts (i.e. the Transit Village Initiative and Main Street Initiative) around security issues, will help ensure their long term success. In other words, if the Transit Village is developed carefully, both the commercial district and the public plaza can share those benefits.

The Fruitvale Open Space Initiative (FOSI)

The Background. Sandborn Park, located a few blocks from the commercial center, is the only park in the Fruitvale neighborhood.[8] Approximately 2 acres in size, the park's on-site amenities include public benches, swings, a small club house and vast amounts of green, open space. Sanborn Park is used by Fruitvale residents and employees from the district. The most disturbing fact about this valuable community resource is the threat it poses to the neighborhood. Skogan (1990) provides a more general commentary on the problems shared by many parks in disorderly areas have in common:

> Parks are places that no one controls; people you do not know come into the neighborhood and use them; youths drink and use drugs there; it is difficult to find legitimate reasons or the means to push undesirables out; you cannot protect or control your kids there. In disorderly neighborhoods, parks are places you keep your children out of (Skogan 1990: 22).

Sandborn park is confronted with similar problems. Disorderly behavior makes people feel unsafe and causes residents to avoid the area which leads to fewer "eyes on the park" and even more disorder. What follows is a discussion of the concerns raised by residents and employees regarding Sanborn Park.

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[8] With only 76 acres of open space for a population of 35,000, Fruitvale has the smallest open space acreage in the city of Oakland.

Crime, Social Disorder and Public Safety.   Parents who visit Sanborn Park often raise concerns regarding threats to public safety and fear for their children.   Parents complain that drug use, public drinking, public urination, and sexual activity lead them to avoid taking their children to the park. A common problem found in the back of the park is needles lying on the ground from drug use. This section of the park is also somewhat secluded, and a community center obstructs visibility, which attracts all sorts of disorderly behavior. Because of the playground equipment, this is also a popular area which attracts many children. The park recreation staff leader provides a brief description of the problem:

> I would say the heaviest period of drug dealing and usage of this park by adults, not children, is in the late afternoon. I would say between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m....various drugs...we find needles in the back of the park, and we've got children playing in the back so that happens in the late afternoon...I've called the rangers on several occasions about people shooting up [drugs] in the bathrooms...Drugs are a day problem...[9]

Local police, community residents, unity council and park staff comment that one source of the drug problem is located near the park entrance.   An apartment building abuts the park, and residents have seen dealing and drug use directly in front of the building. As a unity council staff member explains:

> I have seen people smoking crack right in front of the building ... Local residents have also complained to me that people deal drugs next to the building...there was a neighborhood meeting about that building...there were hookers turning tricks right then and there in the garage of the building it was amazing...at nine in the morning...in the lobby of the building...it was such as mess...the drinking is [also] still a problem...[10]

It is common to see large group of adults hanging out at the park entrance. As the park recreation staff person explains, families and children are intimidated by these people. It appears that loitering at the park is intimately linked to dealing or using drugs. To make matters worse, there is no foot patrol assigned to this neglected section

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[9] Barbara Miller, telephone interview with author. May 5, 1997.

of the neighborhood. The part-time staff person at the park would like to see more security in the area and feels that it would provide families with a greater sense of safety. In short, there is a severe lack of foot patrol to confront the problems at Sanborn Park.

Revitalizing Sanborn Park. A new initiative is planning a renovation of the park which aims to change its current image and put an end to crime and disorderly behavior. In 1996, the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at UC Berkeley was awarded a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of University Partnerships to fund a Joint Community Development (JCD) program. This partnership program is designed to coordinate university and community resources in order to forge the physical and economic improvements in Oakland neighborhoods.

The Fruitvale Open Space Initiative is one of ten projects under the JDC program. The initiative was developed to increase the amount and quality of parks and recreation in the Fruitvale neighborhood and will lead to the complete redesign and reconstruction of Sanborn Park. A big component of this initiative is to reduce the amount of crime in the area. A survey of residents in 1994 revealed that the majority of parents feel the lack of facilities and programs is one of the contributors to juvenile crime in the area.[11] HUD is providing a $120,000 grant toward construction of the redesigned park and recreation center. It is hoped that the completed facilities will provide the following:

> ...safe, well-designed recreation and meeting space for all segments of the population and will contribute to reduction of crime and youth delinquency problems...[and]...redesign of Sandborn Park will be a necessary link in the commercial revitalization... (Torres-Gonzales, 1997: 2).

This initiative will apply defensible space (Newman, 1972) design elements such as more lighting in the evening and open space to create a more safe and inviting public place. The community center will also be relocated to a corner of the park which would allow clear visibility throughout the park. This should create a more open, safe and inviting environment that will deter offensive and threatening behavior. Planner's of the initiative also recognize the importance of police to ensure "a safe environment." However, plans have not been made to ensure this critical safety component.

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[10] Luis Paldo, telephone interview with author. April 15, 1997.

Conclusion

For over 20 years, the Fruitvale neighborhood has been in need of revitalization, and recent initiatives indicate that significant improvements may actually occur . Never in its history has the Fruitvale experienced such a large amount of attention and investment in physical and economic improvements. It is also clear that attempts to make the neighborhood safer and more inviting are vital to the success of the three neighborhood revitalization initiatives—the commercial district, the BART station and the park.

Perhaps the greatest problem in addressing community security issues is the lack of foot patrol in the neighborhood. This is true for the business district, the BART station and Sanborn Park. Tremendous progress has occurred to muster the resources for these initiatives. However, significant investments may be jeopardized if crime and disorder continue to threaten Fruitvale revitalization initiatives such as the Fruitvale BART Transit Village and Sanborn Park. It is clear that efforts to address security issues at the BART station and the park will be vital to restoring order in the Fruitvale and thus the success of the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative.

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[11] The survey was administered by the Fruitvale Community Collaborative in February 1994.

Chapter VI :
Addressing Security Issues in the Fruitvale District

Overview

Throughout this thesis I have discussed how crime, disorder and safety pose major barriers to inner-city neighborhood revitalization. I focused on the Fruitvale District in Oakland, California, and examined specific problems identified in a 1996 Main Street survey. Survey findings and interviews revealed that the overwhelming majority of merchants, property owners and residents were concerned about public safety issues that have not been addressed by the National Main Streets Center (NMSC).[1] The Main Street Program has largely failed to include a critical component in revitalizing retail districts: safety and security. Moreover, the Four-Point Approach does not acknowledge nor address the barriers to organizing in poor and diverse communities.

This thesis also considered an important neighborhood dynamic and the spatial relationship between the commercial district and two troublesome "hot spots"—the Fruitvale BART station and Sanborn Park, located at both ends of the district. I have argued that the commercial district, the BART station and the park are mutually interdependent, and together can provide a viable urban core. As such, efforts to increase community security should focus on these three areas.

This chapter attempts to address the shortcomings of the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative in the Fruitvale Commercial District. The chapter includes recommendations that provide the Spanish Speaking Unity Council with strategies to address the problems which lie at the heart of commercial revitalization in the Fruitvale: security and public safety. These recommendations are also for Fruitvale Main Street project manager, as this person is responsible for coordinating activities to ensure that the Fruitvale District remains a viable and safe shopping area.

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[1] As discussed in Chapter I, the NMSC relies on the following Four-Point Approach to commercial revitalization: (1) organization; (2) design; (3) marketing/promotion; and (4) economic re-structuring.

This chapter is organized in the following manner. Section I considers two factors in making the Fruitvale District more secure: (1) major barriers to addressing security issues; and (2) community assets. Consideration of these issues provides a deeper understanding of community dynamics and local conditions. Section II discusses how to capitalize on the community assets, and provides some recommendations to confront the crime and disorder problem in the Fruitvale.

Making the Fruitvale District More Secure

Major Barriers

The major barriers to addressing security issues in the Fruitvale District are the following:

- **Civic Culture;**
- **Organization of Merchants Associations; and**
- **Insufficient Police Presence**

These barriers are important in understanding some of the challenges in making the Fruitvale District more secure. Yet as will be discussed later, these obstacles can be overcome by capitalizing on the community assets.

Civic Culture. Neighborhood institutions and merchants recognize that the Fruitvale business community could greatly benefit from having merchants participate in voluntary and formal organizations. Increased participation could promote social capital — establish shared interests, develop trust among merchants, strengthen informal social networks, and create opportunities to collectively address problems. However, the majority of Fruitvale merchants are not members of an association. Attempts to address this problem and reach out to the Fruitvale District and build a merchant community has been an enormous challenge for vseveral reasons.

First, unlike neighborhood residents, merchants may have different attachments to the community. As entrepreneurs, merchants are initially motivated by personal ambition and profit-making. And like many entrepreneurs in the inner-city, merchants in the Fruitvale invest enormous amounts of time and energy in their businesses and often struggle to survive. Many businesses are concerned about more pressing issues such as

paying bills, and less interested in civic culture or community involvement. In other words, if there are no immediate (or tangible) benefits to participating in an organization, they are not interested.

Of course, not all merchants struggle or operate on a cash basis. Some entrepreneurs in the Fruitvale are quite wealthy, and differ greatly in terms of class and socioeconomic status. For example, some Fruitvale merchants also live in exclusive neighborhoods outside of the Fruitvale. For these individuals, the idea of "civic culture" is not place based but rather people based. In other words, these merchants do not seek community with the boundaries of the Fruitvale because their friends, homes, and families are elsewhere. Their "personal communities" lie largely outside the spatial community of the Fruitvale.

Another important factor is the cultural and language barriers which can block communication and prevent the development of social relations among merchants. In interviews, merchants report that poor communication and distrust sometimes result from cultural and linguistic differences, and a feeling of powerlessness to address problems in the district through collective or individual action. This problem is complex, but success in the long run means recognizing organization as a key component of revitalization and community building.

The Spanish Speaking Unity Council has experienced the greatest difficulty in communicating and developing social relations with the Asian merchants. Language is a problem, but culture is also a great divider. Moreover, the Asian business community is not represented by an association. On the surface, many Asian merchants appear less civic minded and not interested in participating in NMSI meetings. But this is true for other ethnic groups as well.

Organization of Merchant Associations. The Fruitvale merchant community is one of the most ethnically diverse in the City of Oakland, and is represented by roughly 200 businesses.[2] Some of this diversity is reflected in the three merchant associations which

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[2] The majority of the surveyed businesses in the Fruitvale District are owned by Latino entrepreneurs (51 percent), followed by Asians (19 percent); Whites (12 percent); African - Americans (6 percent); and Other (12 percent).

represent a relatively small segment of the business community which does not yet collaborate[3]:

- **Asociacion de Commerciantes Professionales de Oakland (ACPO)**[4] represents mostly Spanish speaking merchants throughout the City of Oakland, and the Fruitvale district.

- **The Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce of Oakland/La Camara de Comercio de Oakland (Camara)** is also a local Latino/Spanish Speaking merchants association.

- **The Fruitvale Merchants Association (FMA)** is the oldest merchant group and was established in the early 1930s. Today it represents a fairly diverse group of merchants, but has a small active membership.

Camara (the first Latino merchant association in the Fruitvale district) was formed in the 1980s in response to the growing number of Latino merchants in the Fruitvale district. The other merchant group at that time was the FMA, an association which conducted its meetings only in English. The Spanish-speaking merchant population quickly learned that language barriers prevented them from participating in the FMA. Camara represented a new wave of ethnic entrepreneurs and provided an opportunity to hold meetings, share information and voice concerns.

By the early 1990s, problems arose between some of the more active Camara members. The nature of the problem is unclear, but interviews suggest that it was due to personal differences such as control for power and decision making responsibilities. As a result, several merchants broke away from Camara and formed the ACPO. It appears that the tension between both groups continues today. Today the ACPO is the largest association in the Fruitvale District with approximately 50 members representing different sections of Oakland (less than half are Fruitvale merchants).

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[3] Interviews indicate that less half of the merchants in the Fruitvale are members of an association. An even smaller number are active members.
[4] Formerly know as The Union of Latino Merchants of Oakland/ Union de Comerciantes Latino de Oakland (U.C.L.O.)

The Fruitvale Merchants Association (FMA) is the oldest merchant organization in the Fruitvale and traditionally represented the Anglo merchants. Even today, merchants and neighborhood residents refer to FMA as the "gringo" merchant association. The FMA conducts all meetings in English without interpreters, which prevents diverse groups from workong together. Yet recent interviews indicate that the FMA currently has several Latino, Asian and African-American members.[5]

Many Asian merchants do not participate in voluntary or formal organization. It should be noted that in the past, some of the Asian merchants were members of the Vietnamese Fishermans Association. This groups is no longer active in the Fruitvale because many of its members have moved to other sections of the City.

In general, the three merchant groups in the Fruitvale District do not associate with each other. Although they share many of the same concerns, meetings are conducted separately and never in collaboration. To a large extent, this is natural because of language barriers. These splintered merchant associations have presented a difficult challenge for the Fruitvale Main Street Program (and other revitalization initiatives such as the Fruitvale Transit Village discussed in Chapter IV). It has been especially difficult to have merchants attend meetings such as for the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative. Merchant interviews and personal experience also indicate that open communication and trust among merchants needs to be significantly improved.

It is clear that social relations among many merchants are weak. A fundamental problem is the low rate of merchant participation in voluntary and formal organization. Interviews with merchants and Unity Council staff indicate that merchant associations have a relatively small number of members representing the Fruitvale District, and only a handful attend meetings on a regular basis. This has been a problem for years and has prevented local businesses from collaborating and developing a shared vision for the district. The lack of organization and communication among Fruitvale merchants may also explain why the City appears unresponsive to the needs and concerns of the business community.

Insufficient Police Presence. Many police forces in urban America are shrinking, not growing, and this problem is negatively impacting many distresses urban areas where

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[5] Clyde Brewster, interview with author. Oakland, January 8, 1997.

crime and social disorder are rampant. Interviews with merchants, Unity Council staff and Oakland police indicate that the Fruitvale District is in desperate need of more law enforcement, especially foot patrol. Currently, one Spanish-speaking foot patrol officer (who grew up in the Fruitvale) is assigned to walk the district (a total of ten blocks) on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is a large amount of territory for one person to cover, and the need for more officers is evident. Merchants, community residents, and the City agree that more foot patrol (and enhanced visibility) is essential to making the shopping district more secure.

At the same time, the Oakland Police Department (OPD) has a staffing shortage of 80 officers, and it is unlikely that more police will be assigned to the area in the near future. It does appear, however, that a new officer will work in the Fruitvale district on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.[6] Recent trends also look encouraging given that a two-year hiring freeze for the OPD was lifted in 1997.[7] Yet it remains unclear whether the OPD will assign more foot patrol to the Fruitvale District.

Insufficient police is perhaps an even greater problem at Sanborn Park and the BART station. Firstly, there is not a foot patrol officer assigned the Sanborn Park area. Secondly, the Fruitvale BART station is assigned one police officer. This person is not a foot patrol officer and is responsible for patrolling two additional stations. As a result, both of these public places have little or no police visibility.

Community Assets

The Fruitvale Community Collaborative. The Spanish Speaking Unity Council (SSUC) has focused its primary attention in recent years on community and economic development. But it has also renewed its commitment to its original mission of building community coalitions to address social problems such as crime and violence. In 1991, the SSUC helped found the Fruitvale Community Collaborative (FCC), a coalition of several neighborhood organizations that involves local residents in efforts to address issues of physical neighborhood improvements and safety. For example, the FCC is currently working with community residents to form coalitions/committees around activities which include the following:

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[6] Captain Fred Sanchez, telephone interview with author. February 18, 1997.
[7] This may help in the long-run given that it can take an entire year to train and assign new officers.

- Annual clean-ups;
- Tree planting;
- Graffiti abatement projects;
- Leadership training;
- Community walks (safety patrols);
- Park activities;
- Welfare reform and immigration education; and
- Crime prevention.

The FCC has a strong track record at developing partnerships with community resident organizations, and working with residents of diverse backgrounds. Recently, the FCC hired a Vietnamese organizer to develop a stronger relationship with the Asian community. The FCC has also been very effective at identifying (and prioritizing) the more pressing quality of life issues raised in community meetings. For example, the FCC was the leading force behind closing down several troublesome bars such as Ye Old Inn (see Chapter IV). However, a strong relationship does not exist between the FCC and the Fruitvale merchant community.

An important element of trust and open communication between the SSUC and the Fruitvale merchant community has not been well-established. This is difficult to develop for reasons discussed earlier such as a weak "civic culture" among merchants and cultural and language barriers. Although the Main Street program has experienced some success at addressing this problem, trust and open communication between Fruitvale merchants and neighborhood institutions needs significant improvement.

Community Policing in the Fruitvale District. Approximately two years ago the Oakland Police Department (OPD) started a community policing program throughout various sections of the City, including business districts such as the Fruitvale. The goal of the program is to develop a partnership between merchants and the foot patrol officer, to establish local priorities, and to carry out active crime prevention/community improvement operations.

Community policing seeks any credible and effective means to fight crime and disorder, and to improve the quality of community life. It favors a preventive, problem-solving approach that goes beyond the traditional tactics of rapid response, patrol and

investigation. An important element is to establish trust and open communication between the patrol officer and the merchant community. The program has had some success, but the objectives have not been met. A merchant describes the nature of the problem:

> I think community policing is good...I think that it has to go a little further than that...you have to have more police exposure on the street...you have one police officer [in the Fruitvale district] that's running an area that is impossible for him to cover.[8]

Insufficient foot patrol officers on the streets must be addressed. A single foot patrol officer is quite overwhelmed with having to walk an entire beat and maintain order. To communicate effectively with the entire merchant community also requires attending hours of meetings, constant follow-up discussions with individuals and more staff. One foot patrol officer is simply unable to carry out all of these responsibilities in an effective manner.

While the Spanish-speaking foot patrol officer has a good relationship with Latino merchants, cultural and language barriers still exist between other merchants, such as Asians. This has presented some problems for the community policing program in the Fruitvale. The OPD has attempted to provide interpreters during community policing sessions using their own police officers but according to unity council staff they have limited interpreting skills and are not been very effective.[9]

Recommendations

The barriers and assets described in this chapter are important factors which influence the extent to which community strategies can address the crime and disorder problem. The Fruitvale District is confronted with a unique set of circumstances, and efforts to address security issues should be custom-designed to fit local conditions. This section provides some recommendations to make the Fruitvale District more secure and attempts to capitalize on community assets which should serve as the foundation for revitalization strategies.

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[8] Clyde Brewster, interview with author. Oakland, March 5, 1997.
[9] Luis Paldo, telephone interview with author. April 15, 1997

The Spanish Speaking Unity Council's strategy should begin with broad, guiding principles that define the approach to the crime and disorder problem. The strategies are grouped into the following three categories: (1) mobilize merchants; (2) establish a police presence in public places; and (3) physical improvements.

1. *Mobilize Merchants.* Revitalization of the Fruitvale must be a partnership effort. Little can be accomplished in the business district without leadership, open communication among merchants and support from the business community. As community assets, the FCC and the Fruitvale community policing program have experienced some success at involving various merchants. Any attempts to regain control of the business district and maintain a sense of order and safety must enhance opportunities to invest, and build on, those assets.

To expand on some of the recent involvement from the business community, it is important to identify the problems that the majority of merchants share. The basis for this approach is that there are certain common concerns that cut across ethnic lines and other differences.[10] Survey evidence and interviews confirm that merchants consider crime, disorder and public safety as the biggest problems in the district. These issues also have the greatest potential to engage the merchant community and can serve as a powerful mobilizing force. If merchants respond collectively, the Fruitvale District can begin building bridges and thus strengthen efforts to improve local conditions.

Crime and disorder seem to flourish where the community is disorganized. For example, the drug problem in the district weakens the business community, contributing further to the spiral of disorder and decay. To address these problems, the Unity Council should institute a community policing system that encourages a stronger partnership between merchants/residents and the foot patrol officer.

One of the critical features in the development of a productive relationship between the foot patrol officer and the business community is the establishment of a link (or contact) such as an organizer who can work closely with entrepreneurs and merchants associations.

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[10] This is what economists call *integrated values*. Wilson (1991) defines this as a set of moral values which "sanction economic relationships between individuals, and between individuals and the institutions that are created to form a particular economic system; that is, they serve to integrate individual self-interests into a economic system."

Although the NMSI has a dedicated full-time project manager, this person is quite overwhelmed in implementing the "four points" of the program. An additional staff person could serve as the key contact for security issues, coordinate security activities and act as the liaison to the foot patrol officer and the OPD. An organizer from the FCC could serve in this capacity. The Unity Council should consider hiring an FCC staff member to mobilize merchants around security issues and develop activities such as:

- Developing and distributing a local crime newsletter;

- Coordinating merchant and community meetings to educate people about the purpose of community policing and how it could fit the needs of the Fruitvale District. These events should provide merchants with the opportunity to identify the threats to security and create a priority list. Trained interpreters should also be present so that all merchants can participate in the program. The FCC could play an important role in this area given that some staff are fluent in Spanish, and one person speaks Vietnamese;

- Addressing security issues at the Fruitvale BART station and Sanborn Park. This person could work more closely with police in drawing attention to these neglected sections of the neighborhood, and organize the local residents around problem areas such as Sanborn Park.

Part of this strategy echoes the LISC **Retail Security Initiative (RSI)** — demonstration program in which community policing and community development strategies and techniques are applied collaboratively to retail districts in inner-city neighborhoods. The premise of the RSI is that economic conditions cannot be significantly improved until people are safer and less fearful to enter communities adversely affected by security matters. The RSI will build upon work underway in "Main Street" retail districts in Boston, and will be housed and managed by a reputable CDC. The goal of the RSI is to bring measurable reductions in the incidence of crime and to improve resident and shopper perceptions of inner city retail districts. The key elements of the RSI are:

- to establish new relationships between retail district stakeholders and the local police precinct personnel, Police Headquarters and other City agencies, with the expectation that ongoing safety-related problem-solving will continue well beyond the end of the program; and

- to integrate design, physical development, and building hardware solutions to retail district safety problems with community action responses and new community policing strategies.

LISC will oversee the initiative, coordinate resources and raise the required funding. The RSI is a $600,000, three year program, and the funding will largely support a full-time staff person to address security issues. The LISC Program Director in Boston provides a general explanation of how the RSI will function:

> ...we [LISC} envision a full-time professional coordinator...that person's responsibility would be to create a   local partnership around security and safety in the retail district. So we are going to be funding somebody who is going to be creating a partnership structure that would involve the Main Street organization [the lead CDC], the merchants organization, and the other community-based organizations.[11]

The RSI starts in June 1997 and will be implemented first in a single retail district in Boston where a lead CDC is located. It will then expand to other inner city Main Street locations. This is a potential funding source that could assist the Unity Council in addressing security issues in the Fruitvale.

2. *Establish a Police Presence in Public Places.*   Crime and disorder threaten community security in the Fruitvale, and police visibility is an important element that will make merchants, employees, shoppers, and community residents feel safer. This does not mean crime rates will drop as a result of having more police officers. However, greater police visibility in public places will make people feel more secure. Research also confirms that police presence deters disorderly behavior and helps reinforce a sense of order in public places.

In recent months, the OPD has been under growing pressured to improve the community policing program, and it may be assigning new foot patrols in the near future.[12]   The SSUC and the business community should work in partnership and get a commitment from the OPD to increase the number of foot patrol officers in the neighborhood.

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[11] Matt Thal, interview with author. Boston, April 21, 1997.

An important consideration to enhancing police visibility in the Fruitvale District is a new police substation. As discussed in Chapter V, this could serve as an essential ingredient to increasing community security in and around the station area. The substation could provide an important link to the commercial district and help form a lasting partnership to address issues of crime and fear in both places. This space would also encourage the BART Police Department (BPD) to assign an officer to the station. Interviews also indicate that the BPD is interested in developing community policing programs in the future. As one officer explains:

> ...we are decentralizing our police department. It used to be that everybody reported to headquarters in Oakland; now we have substations in downtown San Francisco, Concord, Walnut Creek, Hayward, San Leandro Area...so we are decentralizing, having our officers report to locations out on the lines as we call them...pushing them closer to the neighborhoods the stations serve, so we are drifting that way...(Rich Bentley, telephone interview with author, April 29, 1997).

In terms of crime and disorder problems, the Fruitvale BART station is one of the "most active" stations in the East Bay. These statistics further support the need for a police substation (see Chapter IV). This office could provide opportunities for walk-in crime reporting, telephone reports of crime and disorder, crime prevention information, referral to other agencies, coordination of meetings and door-to-door activities, and an important symbol of safety.

3. *Physical Improvements.*

A comprehensive revitalization strategy should include efforts to improve the physical conditions in the Fruitvale District with attention to buildings, sidewalks and other public spaces. The removal of blight and streetscape improvements can do much to improve the image of an area. Merchants and residents should continue projects that clean up litter and trash, and other community enhancement efforts. The City should also be held accountable for some of the cleanliness problems that periodically build up to unsanitary levels.

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[12] Rudy Villegas, telephone interview with author. March 17, 1997.

The physical improvement process should also include a means of setting priorities among and within the set of urban decay problems. Efforts to "clean up the district" should focus on key nodes or micro-areas that could create the greatest leverage. For example, the corner of 35th Street and East 14th Avenue (located in the heart of the district) is the largest section of open space in the commercial corridor which provides benches and other amenities. At the same time, this is the site of the only mural in the district, which suffers from graffiti and fading colors.

Community enhancement efforts should also focus on revitalizing key symbols such as murals. Murals enhance the appearance of public spaces, and add an element of public art and local culture to otherwise dull buildings and streets. Murals reveal to the shopper or pedestrian an identity of place and community pride. They also strengthen the vision for the district (as defined by the NMSI) which has identified the strong Latino presence as the unique market niche. To tap into this cultural market, the commercial district should capitalize on community assets. Local artists should be contacted to return this important element public art to the Fruitvale.

Conclusion

Commercial revitalization is a long-term process. It takes time to organize the individuals and organizations that will guide the effort. A commitment of time, and energy and money is needed to bring about change in the Fruitvale. All levels of the community and the City must set up a cohesive framework in which to deal effectively with issues and problems. Such a framework should collaborate with formal and informal organization.

The SSUC and the FCC can do a great deal to organize community groups and address local problems. The FCC is an underutilized asset which should work more closely with the Fruitvale business community. FCC organizers could assist in forming a coalition of merchants to ensure that resources are maximized and to encourage and train merchants to participate. Businesses in the Fruitvale District need to organize a support system that will coordinate resources and efforts for improving conditions in the commercial area. This requires developing a shared vision. A vision that promotes values of ethnic and inter-group harmony and unity, and rejects the commonly held view that language and culture is so divisive that individuals of diverse backgrounds cannot

work together in common cause. The foundation of this vision emphasizes issues and problems that concern merchants (and residents) of all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds so that people will come together to improve local conditions.

The SSUC's significant investments may be jeopardized if crime and disorder continue to threaten Fruitvale revitalization initiatives such as the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative, the BART Transit Village and Sanborn Park. Progress is clearly being made, but it will be difficult to sustain the substantial investments in the Fruitvale in the context of threats to safety and security. Strengthening community policing efforts, increasing police visibility and improving the neighborhood environment are perhaps the three most important factors for rebuilding the Fruitvale Commercial District. The synergy created when these three elements are employed collectively can greatly enhance community security efforts. Developing partnerships between the SSUC, merchants and the police is a key starting point to commercial revitalization and thus the success of the Neighborhood Main Street Initiative.

Appendix A: Photographs of the Fruitvale and Facade Improvement, 1996.
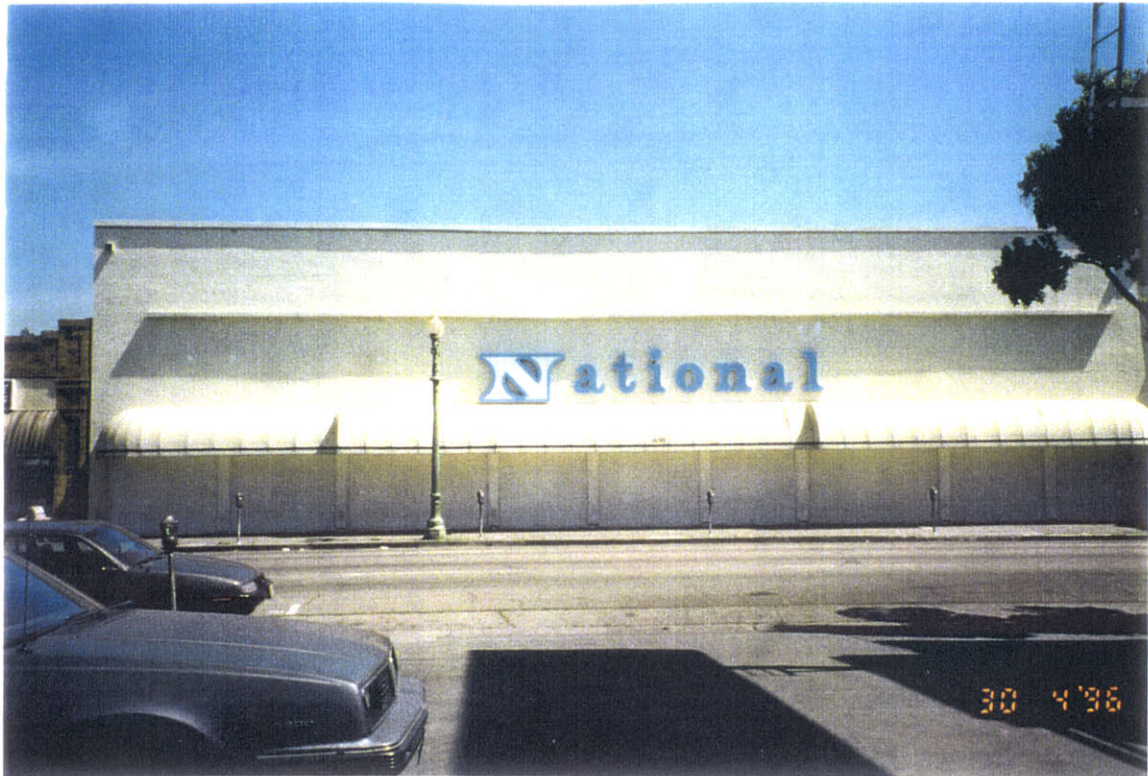
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