LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE APPARENT SUCCESS OF SAN FRANCISCO'S UNION STREET AND BOSTON'S NEWBURY STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

by

Jose Antonio Morales

B.A., Architecture
University of California at Berkeley, 1994

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER IN CITY PLANNING
AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 1996

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Signature of Author: ........................................

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 23, 1996

Certified by: ........................................

John deMonchaux
Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: ........................................

J. Mark Schuster
Professor of Urban Studies and Planning
Chairman, MCP Committee

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on May 23, 1996 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of City Planning

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a set of features explaining the successful creation and management of two small to mid-scale commercial city streets. The thesis deals with issues associated with specialty commercial development and its effect on the immediate area.

My explanation for the success of Union and Newbury Streets rests in the proposition that the physical attributes of the street and its buildings must be administered with appropriate design management tools and organizations in order to protect the quality of the street. Highlighting the different approaches used in San Francisco and Boston provides lessons to be learned for policy writers and merchant and resident groups in other cities faced with the risks that a successful street experiences.

In conclusion, it must be noted that the design guidelines themselves and the method by which they are enacted may raise complicated issues resulting from contradictory policy. Streets in other cities may pose similar or different problems resulting from regulatory mechanisms and bodies. Therefore, studying problems related to the integration of regulation and organizational representation warrants further inquiry.

My thesis research included participant observation, a literature survey, and interviewing. Survey literature dealt with physical form, land use, design guidelines, and history. A handful of in-depth interviews were conducted in San Francisco and Boston with heads of neighborhood and merchant groups, planning officials, real estate brokers, and residents. Numerous merchants on both streets were also interviewed briefly. By utilizing a three-tiered research approach, I hoped to capture a multi-dimensional snapshot of two unique commercial streets.

Thesis Supervisor: John deMonchaux
Title: Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents a set of features explaining the successful creation and management of two small to mid-scale commercial city streets. The thesis analyzes the issues uniquely associated with the creation of specialty commercial development and its effect on the immediate residential area. The thesis attempts to identify features which create successful and pleasant environments for visitors to the street while maintaining the quality of living for residential neighbors. Essentially, the thesis examines the need to protect the street from its own success.

My explanation for the success of Union and Newbury Streets rests in the proposition that the physical attributes of the street and its buildings must be administered with appropriate design management tools and organizations in order to protect the quality of the street. My approach is rooted in the belief that there should be a balance between the interests of businesses and residents. Success is more than just good sales for merchants and a nice environment for nonresident pedestrians—streets must retain usefulness to residents and not infringe on their quality of living.

Some might say that San Francisco’s Union Street and Boston’s Newbury Street merely result from proximity to affluent neighborhoods and the constant influx of tourists. Regardless of these critiques, these two streets illustrate my point that maintaining commercial development at this smaller scale requires regulation and (group) representation because each street otherwise would have fallen prey to the wrecking ball and be replaced with more intense or less sightly structures. The thesis rests on the premise that the development process consists of two stages: creation and stewardship. I argue that enacting controls which protect particular physical qualities of the street’s existing structures together with stewardship through representation have been key in ensuring Union and Newbury Streets success. Ultimately, their long term success is due to the formation of local organizations which counteract potentially negative externalities stemming from commercial development.

Union and Newbury Streets, while sharing similar building types, serve different functions. Despite the fact both streets serve a wide and tourist-dependent retail market, Union Street retains more of its neighborhood-serving character. Newbury Street, on the other hand, essentially plays the role of downtown shopping street though physically located in a residential neighborhood\(^1\). I have decided to study the aforementioned streets because San Francisco and Boston have been compared in terms of physical size, beauty, density, and imageability.\(^2\) Furthermore, both cities have enacted planning policy and

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\(^1\) Both commercial districts are located approximately 1.5 miles from the physical downtown of each city. The distance from downtown San Francisco to the Union Street Commercial District feels longer than it actually is due to the city’s grid pattern.

\(^2\) According to the 1990 census, San Francisco’s population is 723,959 while that of Boston is 574,283. The area of the two cities are 46.7 and 48.4 square miles respectively. San Francisco’s average density is 15,502 people / sq. mile while that of Boston is 11,865 people / sq. mile.
design controls to check large scale office development. By examining successful retail streets in similar cities, the thesis can evaluate whether any of the attributes which make each area successful are shared between the two neighborhoods or are specific to each city.

The thesis first measures the vitality of Union and Newbury Streets against criteria cited in academic literature in order to establish their success. Based on the history of each street, the thesis contends that success necessitates more than physical features and a good use mix because uncontrolled development can undo both. True success is made possible by the actions of interest groups and mechanisms which protect physical attributes, use mixtures, and residents' living environment in addition to marketing the street. Highlighting the different approaches used in San Francisco and Boston provides lessons to be learned for policy writers and merchant and resident groups in other cities faced with the risks that a successful street experiences.

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3 In 1986, San Francisco voters passed Proposition M in which a provision limits office development to 475,000 square feet a year. In 1990, the Boston Civic Design Commission, an advisory review board, was established by the city.
CHAPTER ONE

Union Street Profile

Union Street is a 2.5 mile long street that stretches from the San Francisco waterfront to the Lyon Street wall of the Presidio Army Base in the north central part of the city. (FIG.#1) The subject of my thesis research in San Francisco is but a short part of the street. Unless otherwise noted, the term “Union Street” in the text refers to the Union Street Commercial District. Union Street, located in San Francisco’s Cow Hollow, is nestled between the large homes atop the hills of Pacific Heights and the flat land of the Marina District. Both Pacific Heights and the Marina are considered two of San Francisco’s most desirable neighborhoods today. Union Street currently serves as the main commercial area for Cow Hollow. The Union Street Commercial District is ten and a half blocks long. It includes Union Street between Van Ness Avenue and Steiner Street and Fillmore Street between Union and Lombard Streets. (FIG.#2)

Historically, Union Street served as the pathway to the Presidio Army Base where Spanish soldiers were once stationed. The immediate area served as a cow pasture, hence, the name of Cow Hollow. Settlers also used this region and its lagoon as a place to launder. The natural edge of San Francisco Bay was located on the north side of present-day Chestnut Street. (FIG.#3) This area, now known as the Marina, was filled-in for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition. Temporary yet grand Beaux-Arts buildings were constructed for the event. When the fair closed, all its structures with the exception of the Palace of Fine Arts were razed. The Marina then began to be developed which stimulated growth around Union Street. A cable car provided transportation along it. For most of its history, Union Street was quite nondescript. Many of today’s storefronts were once garages. “The Cow Hollow neighborhood could be characterized as a conservative, family oriented neighborhood.” A sizable number of working class individuals lived on the street. In the 1960’s, Union Street began to change when a few antiques stores appeared along with a number of “funky” stores shortly after. The commercialization of the street became evident by the 1970’s as a substantial number of restaurants and bars opened. Union Street boomed in the 1980’s.

Pacific Heights, the abutting residential neighborhood, offers spacious mansions and elegant apartment living. It is home to numerous consulates. The Marina, another abutting residential neighborhood, consists mostly of stucco Mediterranean homes, flats, and apartment buildings. The Marina, popularly known as San Francisco’s “yuppie” neighborhood, boasts the Palace of Fine Arts and its Exploratorium Science Museum. The historic Presidio Army Base is located to the west of Union Street. On the east runs Van Ness Avenue which stretches from Ghiradelli Square and Fisherman’s Wharf to the north down to Civic Center in the south. Parallel to Union Street runs Lombard Street, a heavily trafficked thoroughfare leading to and from the Golden Gate Bridge. A hotel and motel row is found along this automobile-oriented strip. Chestnut Street, the Marina’s
main commercial street, lies immediately north of Lombard Street. One can walk from Union Street to Chestnut via Fillmore, all the while strolling along nearly continuous commercial frontage.

The typical pattern of the built environment on Union Street in the recent past is traditionally commercial use on the ground level and residential above. However, residential spaces above ground level have been transformed into office space. One of the unusual aspects of Union Street is that several businesses along its length are located in what once were residential backyards and are accessed via what once were worker’s entry doors. Structures along Union Street are typically wood-frame Victorian and Edwardian buildings of light hue. The built form of the street is compact as row houses are the typical pattern in the vicinity. Most buildings on Union Street are of a similar pedestrian scale. Most retail on Union Street is found along a continuous frontage of commercial establishments. Some shops are found below or partially below grade. In general, the street reads well, it is relatively easy to distinguish a business from a residence.

Retail establishments on Union Street are typically small specialty shops: gift stores, clothiers, restaurants, offices, and bars are common. The arts are represented by a number of galleries and a movie theater. Union Street serves a wide market area, yet retains its neighborhood-serving ambiance. Although goods sold on Union Street are of quality, the street has few big name retailers; Kenneth Cole and Armani Exchange are the exception. There are a number of retail chains represented on Union Street but these do not overwhelm it in appearance. This is partially due to opposition against chain stores in the neighborhood and other residential areas in San Francisco. As I shall later point out, such opposition is vital in maintaining a successful commercial street.

Newbury Street Profile

Newbury Street, a relatively short street, runs parallel to the Charles River across from MIT. (FIG.#4) Although the street stretches one block further, the subject of my study is that part between Arlington Street on the east to Massachusetts Avenue on the west. Back Bay, the neighborhood in which Newbury Street is located, is bounded by the Charles River to the north, The Public Garden to the east, a cluster of mid-and high-rises to the south, and freeway to the west. The Back Bay is primarily late 19th century Victorian brownstone houses. It is a residential neighborhood- in this case one designed to be Boston’s most desirable. The tree-lined promenade of Commonwealth Avenue, which runs parallel to Newbury Street, underscores the grand vision for the neighborhood.

Back Bay is a product of Boston’s expansion of the Shawmut Peninsula in the nineteenth century. Originally, the site was composed of tidal flats and marshes. (FIG.#5) Uriah Cotting together with the Roxbury Mill Corporation commenced

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4 Four styles predominate: French Academic, Ruskin Gothic, Queen Anne/Romanesque Revival, and various other historic revivals.
development of the Back Bay in 1814 with the construction of a mill dam. Two railroad
lines, the Boston-Providence and the Boston-Worcester, eventually constructed tracks
which crossed over the marshy flats on causeways during the 1830's. Through a gradual
process, the Back Bay was filled in completely by 1882. The grid form of the
neighborhood is unusual in Boston as most of the city's other streets are organically
shaped. Back Bay was meant to be a special place to live- therefore the unique lay out.
Despite this, railroad yards remained. Those areas closest to the Public Garden and civic
institutions were more desirable while those close to the rail yards were less desirable.
The street's first business establishment opened in 1905 at 73 Newbury. After the first
world war, retail began to expand on Newbury Street. What were single family homes
began to be broken down into smaller units in the 1930's when suburbs became more
accessible by car in addition to socio-economic changes of the time. Several
professional, vocational, and junior colleges moved into Back Bay at the end of World
War II, thereby increasing the presence of a younger population in the neighborhood.
Within the last several years, the street has become a moneyed place for the international
set, and does little to offer neighborhood shopping for daily needs.

Numerous schools, dormitories, churches, and fraternity houses are found today in
the northern part of the Back Bay along with its residences. Newbury Street, located
close to Back Bay's southern edge, is the area's main commercial street. To the south of
Newbury Street lies an agglomeration of large and mixed-use construction. (FIG.#6) A
portion of Boston's financial activities take place there in what is known as the Insurance
District. This area lies immediately south of the residential scale buildings of Newbury
Street. There one finds the original John Hancock Building and the New England Life
Insurance Building.

Newer and much taller structures also exist very near Newbury Street. The most
prominent buildings, just two blocks away, are the 60 story John Hancock Building
(1976) and the Prudential Building (1965)- Boston's tallest structures. Clustered around
these two skyscrapers are a series of hotels and mid-rise residential and office buildings
and two major shopping centers- upscale Copley Place and the Shops at Prudential
Center. This southern edge of Back Bay is also home to the Hynes Convention Center.
Major cultural institutions and points of interest such as the Boston Public Library,
Trinity Church, and Copley Square are a one block stroll south of Newbury Street. Other
nearby landmarks include: the Boston Symphony, Berklee School of Music, and the
Christian Science Complex.

Newbury Street retail development begins distinctively at Arlington Street
adjacent to the Public Garden. To the east of the carefully landscaped Public Garden lies
the Boston Common. Abutting the Boston Common is Downtown Crossing and the
Financial District. The western end of Newbury Street development ends abruptly as it

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6 Source: Back Bay Development Plan, p.11.
7 Source: Back Bay Development Plan, p. 12.
began. Commercial development clearly ends at Massachusetts Avenue. Although Newbury Street extends beyond Massachusetts Avenue, development ends because the Massachusetts Turnpike runs along one side of the street from this intersection on westwards.

The typical pattern of the built environment on Newbury Street is traditionally commercial use on the ground level or below grade with residential use above. Residential spaces above ground level have also been transformed into retail or office space. Structures along Newbury Street are typically Victorian brownstones. The built form of the street is compact as row houses are the predominant prototype in the neighborhood. Most buildings on Newbury Street are of a similar pedestrian scale. There a few larger scale buildings including: Tower Records, Boston Architectural Center, and The New England Life Insurance Building (11 stories) and numerous small office buildings which exceed the average Newbury Street height of four stories. Most retail on Newbury Street is found along a continuous frontage of commercial establishments. Sometimes it is difficult to read the street well. It can be difficult to distinguish a business from a residence or to find a door which leads to a particular store.

Retail on Newbury Street is typically small to mid-size specialty shops. Gift stores, clothiers, restaurants, outdoor cafes, offices, and galleries are common. Evidence of serving a wide market is more apparent on Newbury Street than on Union Street. Chain stores are apparently more tolerated on Newbury Street as it prominently features the likes of The Gap, Banana Republic, and Patagonia in addition to local businesses. Although shops belonging to retail chains can be seen on particular blocks of the street, it is not reduced to being a generic mall because mechanisms have been enacted to protect the district’s physical attributes.

Observing the types of businesses on Newbury Street, the intensity of use, and nearby institutions leads me to argue that the street serves the role of a downtown although not physically located in the central business district. For example, high end retail (typically centrally located) such as Gianni Versace, Cartier, Brooks Brothers, and Armani are concentrated on the easternmost block of Newbury Street at Arlington Street. San Francisco has these same stores- yet they are located in the downtown retail core of Union Square. The different role Union and Newbury Streets play become evident when considering each street’s competition. Union Street’s primary competition comes from other San Francisco commercial districts. Newbury Street’s principal competitors are the nearby mixed-use developments of Copley Place and Prudential Center in addition to Boylston Street. The downtown role played by Newbury Street is in part due to the presence of these two complexes and other mid to high-rises in the immediate vicinity south of Back Bay. The development of this area was guided by the “high spine” concept which became development policy in Boston during the 1960’s. Essentially, the Boston Redevelopment Authority promoted a corridor of office towers for this area which housed disused rail yards.
Whereas Boston expanded large office and commercial uses outside the confines of the central business district, San Francisco sought to contain them. There policy was geared towards maintaining the Union Square area in downtown San Francisco as the region’s retail hub. Besides Union Square, San Francisco’s retail activities are concentrated in several distinct neighborhood commercial districts - of which Union Street is one. Thus, San Francisco has compartmentalized its development while Boston has become more fluid. Despite different policy approaches towards downtown development in each respective city, the success of both streets I examined rests in the application of regulation and representation in the district.

**Comparative Physical Profile**

Union and Newbury Streets share two basic attributes: a gridiron street pattern and low rise mixed-use buildings with commercial space on the ground level and residential or commercial above. (FIGS. 7&8) Union Street is a thoroughfare which carries two way traffic while Newbury Street is a one way street. Both Union and Newbury Streets are serviced by public transit. The 22 Fillmore, 41 Union, and the 45 Lyon bus lines run through the Union Street Commercial District. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) Green Line trolley stops at the edge of Newbury Street at Massachusetts Avenue and again at Copley and Arlington stops. Union Street is wider than Newbury Street. Sidewalk widths on Union Street are mostly consistent at about 12 feet. Buildings on Union Street tend to be built at the property line. On the other hand, sidewalk widths vary on Newbury Street from 12 to 24 feet because buildings on some blocks are set back from the property line allowing for a transition zone and creating room for outdoor cafes. (FIG.#9) Newbury Street blocks tend to be longer (~620 feet) and narrower (~245 feet) than those on Union Street (~430 feet by ~300 feet). Roof line heights can be very uniform on parts of Newbury Street (4+ stories), whereas they tend to vary along Union Street (+/-3 stories). From a pedestrian’s viewpoint, Newbury Street feels more grand than Union Street by virtue of its taller structures and the transition space created by setback buildings which produce a long perspective view down the street.

**Comparative Market Profile**

Newbury Street, by virtue of its adjacency to the “high spine” and the Shawmut Peninsula’s relatively small scale, is more intensely developed than Union Street. Newbury Street businesses are located on the ground story, below grade, and above. Floorplates on Newbury Street tend to be larger than those found on Union Street. An average size Union Street shop is 1000 square feet. Shop sizes on Newbury Street typically range in size from 1200 to 1800 square feet. The most valuable real estate on Union Street are the three blocks west of Perry’s Restaurant. (Between Buchanan and Steiner) Traditionally, the most valuable real estate on Newbury Street is the block

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8 Objective II, Policy II of San Francisco’s Downtown Plan reads “Guide location of office development to maintain a compact downtown core and minimize displacement of other uses.”

9 Measurement includes distance between public alley behind Newbury Street to Boylston Street.
between Berkeley and Arlington Streets. In recent years, the block between Massachusetts Avenue and Hereford Street has also become very desirable. Commercial rents tend to be higher on Newbury Street. Rents on the block between Berkeley and Arlington Streets can run $80 a year per square foot. The middle blocks of Newbury Street can bring in rents of between $30 and $40 a year per square foot. Commercial rents on Union Street run the gamut of $22-$30 a year per square foot. A 25% premium is placed on Union Street corner lots. Union Street leases tend to be drafted for shorter periods of time (two years plus a two year option) than the typical lease on Newbury Street (five to ten years plus a two year option).

Union Street Group Representation

The Union Street Association, Golden Gate Valley Association, and Cow Hollow Neighbors in Action influence development and neighborhood affairs. I focus on the Union Street Association as it affects the built environment most directly as author of the commercial district architectural guidelines. A volunteer, business-oriented group consisting of merchants and boosters, it both markets the street and reviews district development proposals in a quasi-official capacity. Final say on development in the district rests with the city planning commission. Neighborhood advocacy groups (Golden Gate Valley Association and Cow Hollow Neighbors in Action) have no official affiliation with design guidelines.

Newbury Street Group Representation

The Newbury Street League, the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB), the Back Bay Association, and the Back Bay Architectural Commission affect development issues. The Newbury Street League, NABB, and the Back Bay Architectural Commission separately play the roles of marketer, neighborhood advocate, and judge of development proposals respectively. The Newbury Street League represents the commercial interests of the street. The Back Bay Association represents the business interests of all the neighborhood's merchants. NABB, on the other hand, represents the interests of Back Bay's residents. Lastly, the Back Bay Architectural Commission sizes up projects and exterior renovations against the Back Bay Architectural Guidelines. This body has the authoritative word on development in the district.

Union Street Regulatory Profile

The Union Street Commercial District, part of San Francisco's planning code, is designated C-2 zoning (community business district). The city, in this first layer of regulation, prescribes permissible uses for the vicinity. However, the Union Street Design Guidelines which affect building details are not an official part of the planning

10 Source: Interview with Tim Locke, RM Bradley.
11 Source: Interview with Tim Locke, RM Bradley.
12 Source: Interview with Joseph Kissell, McGuire Real Estate.
The use of these self-imposed guidelines was adopted by the San Francisco Planning Commission on July 7, 1983 under planning commission motion No. 9751. They essentially serve as a benchmark to trigger discretionary review.

The integral relationship between regulation and representation is accentuated as the guidelines were brought about in large part by residents' and merchants' requests for a study regarding design controls on the street. The planning department then conducted a study of the commercial district in 1978 to explore the issue. Meanwhile, development proposals for Union and Fillmore Streets were scrutinized under the Commission's use of discretionary review. "The Union Street Special Use District was established for the purpose of regulating future commercial growth in a manner which would encourage economic vitality while providing a diverse selection of goods and services with a minimum disruption to the surrounding neighborhood."

**Newbury Street Regulatory Profile**

Newbury Street is zoned by the city as a retail business and office district. There are few as-of-right uses within the designation. Restaurants, for example, are not an as-of-right use in this first level of planning overlay. Proposals for other uses must be heard before the Boston Redevelopment Authority or the board of appeals to receive a conditional use permit. If denied, the last recourse is to go before the zoning board of appeals.

The Back Bay Architectural District and Commission were established in 1966 by the General Court. Together they represent a finer grain of planning controls affecting building detail. The Commission operates under the City's Environment Department by Chapter 625 of the Acts of 1966. The act enables the Commission to review and approve exterior changes to buildings within the district. This includes all demolitions, new construction, alterations, and repairs. Signs and other features are also included in the jurisdiction. "Persons contemplating any exterior work must obtain approval from the commission prior to commencing work." The boundaries of the district are as follows: Back Street on the north, Arlington Street to the east, Boylston Street on the south, and Charlesgate East to the west. The origins of the Back Bay Architectural District (originally the Back Bay Residential District) stem from a zoning proposal that would have allowed the demolition and erection of tall residential buildings at corner locations on Newbury Street. Today's set of commercial and residential guidelines were adopted incrementally. In 1966, the guidelines (then pertaining only to residential uses) were first released. Buildings on Newbury and Boylston Streets were razed because the boundaries of the district extended no further south than Commonwealth Avenue. Boundaries of the district were expanded in 1974 to include part of Newbury Street and again in 1979. By 1981, alley elevations behind Newbury Street came under jurisdiction of the commission.

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13 Source: *Union Street Design Guidelines*, p. 19.
14 Source: *Union Street Design Guidelines*, p. 19.
15 Source: *Back Bay Architectural Commission Guidelines for the Residential District*.
16 Source: *Back Bay Architectural Commission Guidelines for the Residential District*.
17 Source: Interview with William Young, Back Bay Architectural Commission.
The commission consists of nine commissioners and five alternates appointed by the Mayor. Nominees for commissioner spots are named by the Back Bay Association, the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay, the Boston Society of Architects, the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, and the Mayor's office. Property owners seeking to make exterior changes to their facade must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City's Environment Department. Applications for alterations are reviewed by the Commission at a monthly public hearing. If granted, a Certificate of Appropriateness is valid for one year.

Image, Legibility, and Observations

My impression of Union and Newbury Streets is that each possesses a different dynamic in terms of image, social ambiance and consistency in shop types. Since the Union Street Commercial District is but a short stretch of Union Street’s length, a stroll down the street feels very different from that on comparatively shorter Newbury Street. Approaching the Union Street Commercial District from either end of Union Street, one feels the transition from residential to commercial uses very gradually. Once inside the heart of the commercial district, the image of continuous commercial frontage is quite strong. There is a consistency in the store types found on Union Street as many are specialty shops. In terms of pedestrians, the appearance of the crowd along Union Street is fairly consistent as people tend to be well dressed. A substantial number of college age adults in casual attire and young professionals are typically found on the street- especially on weekend nights.

Newbury Street, on the other hand, possesses two distinct characters. The blocks closest to Arlington Street consist of mostly high end retail. Pedestrians on these blocks tend to be well dressed and older. As one walks westward, the character of the street gradually transforms. Products sold are more moderately priced as shops become geared towards the younger set. The symbolic anchors of this dichotomy are the Ritz Hotel at Arlington Street and Tower Records at Massachusetts Avenue. Historically, this split may be traced to the influence of cultural institutions on the development near Arlington Street versus the proximity of railyards near Massachusetts Avenue. There is quite a mix of pedestrians on Newbury Street. The street attracts both socialites and those in the alternative music scene. The Newbury Street League, a merchant association, asserts “The shopping spectrum ranges from chic, upscale boutiques starting at Arlington Street to hip and trendy shops closer to Massachusetts Avenue with a wide range to offer in between.”

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San Francisco Map
How To Reach Union Street

FIG. #1
Welcome to Boston
FIG. #7

COW HOLLOW
FIG. # 8

THE BACK BAY
CHAPTER 2

Establishing Success

In order to present elements leading to a successful commercial district, it is necessary to define what is meant in this context by "success." Union and Newbury Streets, are gauged against literature dealing with "good" streets and the design process. Specifically, I turn to Allan Jacobs’ Great Streets, Jane Jacobs’ Death and Life of Great American Cities, and Robert Eury and Gary Hack’s Lessons from Local Experience. These authors’ study of environments address five issues: physical form, land use, density, authenticity of place, and community involvement. If I were to gel the thoughts of all the authors, a good built environment is an authentic and complex place typically of pedestrian scale.

Allan Jacobs cites that the foremost requirement of a great street is that it “should help make community.” A great street is a place for social interaction which draws people from all walks of life. Jacobs specifies that he does not advocate “sanitizing streets to avoid societal misfits.” Therefore, great streets are real places which are usually not forgettable. Jacobs notes “the best streets are those that can be remembered.” In his book, Allan Jacobs includes both requirements for great streets and qualities that contribute to such streets.

Jane Jacobs’ Death and Life of Great American Cities stresses the importance of density and a diverse mix of land uses and buildings. Her reasoning follows that a sufficient density and a diversity of uses leads to a complex environment that operates at different hours of the day and night. Jane Jacobs presents four generators/conditions for city diversity. They are the need for: primary mixed uses, small blocks, mingling of buildings, and a sufficiently dense concentration of people. “In combination, these conditions create effective economic pools of use.”

Eury and Hack’s Lessons from Local Experience examines the development process through a humanistic approach. The authors argue good places are more than a physical entity because community involvement is required as part of the total development process. “By good places we do not necessarily mean those of postcard quality or worthy of discussion in a history textbook, but rather places lived in and well maintained over time- places suiting those who use them regularly, and, at least some of the time, adding delight to the experience of living in cities.” Essentially, “Good processes help connect people with how changes to their surroundings are determined.”

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20 Source: Great Streets, p. 8.
21 Source: Great Streets, p. 9.
22 Source: Great Streets, p. 9.
23 Source: Death and Life of Great American Cities, p. 151.
24 Source: Lessons from Local Experience, p. 16.
25 Source: Lessons from Local Experience, p. 16.
Table One gauges both streets against criteria outlined in the literature. The variables I have selected are those most salient ones which can be manipulated by humans for better or for worse. The source of each variable is indicated in parenthesis next to it. In some cases, I provide an explanation of the variable in order to clarify the author’s thoughts for the reader. Having sought to demonstrate the success of Union and Newbury Streets, I explain why regulation and representation have been essential to maintaining their success. Making good design is a process. Acknowledging the process is important because good design is both created and maintained. Union and Newbury Streets both illustrate the process because each street has groups which protect the physical attributes, use mixes, and resident interests which make for successful commercial streets.
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SUMMARY OF COMPARISONS BASED ON CRITERIA IN THE LITERATURE |
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Comparisons Based On Criteria In The Literature

Physical
Places For People To Walk With Some Leisure. (Great Streets)
Union and Newbury Streets are nice places to stroll. They are streets on which to people-watch and window shop. Since both streets are flat, pedestrians need not exert excess energy. Despite the differences in sidewalk widths, both streets feature sidewalk cafes which enliven the landscape. Those found on Union Street, by virtue of its relatively narrower walkways, are more modest than the outdoor cafes at Newbury Street.

Definition. (Great Streets)
Jacobs explains, “They (great streets) have boundaries, usually walls of some sort or another, that communicate clearly where the edges of the street are, that set the street apart, that keep the eyes on and in the street, that make it a place.”

He continues, “Streets are defined in two ways: vertically, which has to do with the height of buildings or walls or trees along a street; and horizontally, which has most to do with the length of and spacing between whatever is doing the defining.”

Of the two streets, Newbury Street is the more defined. (FIG.#10) The Union Street Commercial District, on the other hand, is but a small part of the entire street’s length. Perception of entering the district is a gradual process. Building heights on Union and Newbury Streets create a sense of enclosure. Rooflines tend to be uniform along Newbury Street and vary on Union Street.

Qualities That Engage The Eyes. (Great Streets)
The interaction of light, building details, and shadow create visual interesting environments for the pedestrian to observe and enjoy. Union and Newbury Streets’ buildings in general have character and provide visual depth. Walking down these streets one does not experience the mundane floor to ceiling windows typical in malls. (FIG.#11)

Transparency. (Great Streets)
Transparency is when a pedestrian gets a sense of what goes on inside a building. “Usually it is windows and doors that give transparency. On commercial streets, they invite you in, they show you what is there and, if there is something to sell or buy, they entice you.”

“Doorways do the same, with or without glass. They take you in, if only psychologically. They let you know, even if you cannot see, that something is inside. The more doorways the better. The best streets are replete with entryways, as little as 12 feet apart.”

26 Source: Great Streets, p. 276.
27 Source: Great Streets, p. 276.
28 Source: Great Streets, p. 286.
29 Source: Great Streets, p. 286.
Jacobs also specifically mentions retail streets, “On the best shopping streets there may be a transition zone between the street and the actual shop doorways, a zone of receding show windows and space for outside displays that are welcoming attention getters.” \(^{30}\)

On both Union and Newbury Streets windows provide a glimpse of what is beyond the public right of way. (FIG.#12) Goods are displayed for the passerby to see. Generally, Union Street windows seem to retain the original character of their buildings quite well. There are some businesses on Newbury Street whose windows I feel are too big- almost mall-like. Doorways are frequently spaced on both streets. It is fairly easy to read the types of uses on Union Street with the occasional exception of businesses situated in the back yards of lots. Newbury Street is sometimes hard to read as some businesses are located in buildings which from the exterior appear to be residential. The brown hue of Newbury Street buildings may cause confusion to an observer gauging scale as an entire block can consist of buildings of almost identical color.

**Complementarity. (Great Streets)**

“Overwhelmingly, the buildings on the best streets get along with each other. They are not the same but they express respect for one another, most particularly in height and in the way they look.” \(^{31}\)

In general, buildings today on Union and Newbury Streets relate well to each other in terms of height and appearance. There are some exceptions which stray drastically from the typical form or character in the area. For instance, The New England Life Insurance Building, a massive 11 story building, takes up an entire Back Bay block. The 2001 Union Street Building, a substantial edifice, was constructed on the site of several Victorians. Such loss of buildings indicate to me the need for guidelines which protect contextualism.

**Maintenance. (Great Streets)**

In general both streets and its properties are well maintained, thereby providing a pleasant environment for pedestrians. Litter and vandalism are occasionally observable.

**Quality Of Construction And Design. (Great Streets)**

Buildings on Union and Newbury Streets in general are well constructed and possess nicely executed details such as entryways, bay windows, brickwork, molding, paneling, and window trimmings.

\(^{30}\) Source: *Great Streets*, p. 286.

\(^{31}\) Source: *Great Streets*, p. 287.
Trees.* (Great Streets)
Trees are found on both of the streets I have studied. Weather and species of the tree affect their visual impact on each respective street. Union Street’s trees are green year-round. On the other hand, the leaves of Newbury Street trees shed during the winter. Manicured bushes, potted plants, and flower stands also add greenery and color to the streetscape.

Beginnings And Endings.* (Great Streets)
As mentioned earlier, the concentration of businesses along Union Street in the Union Street Commercial District begins and ends very gradually. On the other hand, the chief commercial portion of Newbury Street begins and ends rather abruptly.

Many Buildings Rather Than Few, Diversity.* (Great Streets)
Jacobs explains, “With more buildings there are likely to be more architects, and they will not all design alike. There are more contributors to the street, more and different participants, all of whom add interest.”

He continues, “Having more rather than fewer buildings may or may not result in greater diversity of uses and activities. The different buildings can, however, be designed for a mix of uses and destinations that attract mixes of people from all over a city or neighborhood, which therefore helps build community: movies, different sized stores, libraries. Yes, all of those uses can be designed into one single building....-but they lack the interest and diversity that comes with a variety of owners, buildings, stores, and designers. None of them can match the great streets.”

In a similar way, Union and Newbury Streets offer an authentic richness of store types that can not be replicated within a mall environment.

Special Design Features: Details.* (Great Streets)
Besides architecture itself, Union and Newbury Streets feature details which demarcate the area as unique. For example, both streets have their own particular lamp posts. (FIG.#13)

Places.* (Great Streets)
Both streets, particularly Union Street, are linearly oriented and have no traditional open space on them per se. However, opportunity for socialization is possible at cafes and especially along Newbury Street’s transition zone. (FIG.#14)

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32 In Great Streets, Jacobs differentiates between requirements for great streets and qualities that contribute to them. Elements marked by an asterisk in this chapter are qualities that contribute.
33 Source: Great Streets, p. 297.
34 Source: Great Streets, p. 298.
Accessibility.* *(Great Streets)*
Union and Newbury Streets are physically accessible by public transit. However, I feel that there may be a social “inaccessibility” that manifests itself differently on each street of interest. In the popular imagination, Union Street is considered somewhat of a street where yuppies or preppies congregate. Not everyone may be comfortable with this stereotype of the area. Despite the thorough pedestrian mix on Newbury Street, some high end businesses towards Arlington Street are accessed by being buzzed in. This may forge a psychological barrier between the pedestrian and certain shops.

Length.* *(Great Streets)*
Allan Jacobs writes, “Though we cannot specify just how long is too long, we can hypothesize that at some points along a long street some changes are necessary if interest is to be sustained.”

*Condition # 2 For City Diversity. (Death and Life of Great American Cities)*
Jane Jacobs similarly concedes “Most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners must be frequent.”

Blocks on Union Street do not seem too long for me as a pedestrian. Newbury Street blocks are longer- but there is enough activity and points of interest on the street to captivate the pedestrian and prevent boredom.

Contrast.* *(Great Streets)*
“Contrast in design is what sets one street apart from another, and ultimately what makes one great and another less so.”

Union and Newbury Streets differ aesthetically and are more complex than their neighboring streets to the north and south. The streets immediately to the north and south of Union Street are almost strictly residential. The street directly north of Newbury Street is a residential one facing tree-lined Commonwealth Avenue. To the south of Newbury Street is the commercial corridor of Boylston Street- a street which is not as elegant as Newbury.(FIG.#15)

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35 Source: *Great Streets*, p. 305.
36 Source: *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 178.
37 Source: *Great Streets*, p. 306.
Land Use

Diversity.* (Great Streets)
“Diverse uses enliven the area and the street, bring different people for different purposes, help to keep it going. Variety, activity, liveliness of physical place are likely effects of diversity of uses.38”

Condition #1 For City Diversity. (Death and Life of Great American Cities)
“The district, and indeed as many of its internal parts as possible, must serve more than one primary function; preferably more than two. These must insure the presence of people who go outdoors on different schedules and are in the place for different purposes, but are able to use many facilities in common.39”

Condition #3 For City Diversity. (Death and Life of Great American Cities)
“The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a good proportion of old ones so that they vary in the economic yield they must produce. This mingling must be fairly close-grained.40”

Interchangeable Use. (Lessons from Local Experience)
“This suggests that good places must be able to accommodate interchangeable uses over time. Great cities and neighborhoods have lived beyond generations and single purposes. Great places must, as a result, sustain short- and long- range change while retaining intrinsic environmental qualities.41”

Union and Newbury Streets each have a mixture of uses. Office, residential, dining establishments, and galleries are the most popular uses that both streets share. On the other hand, what leads to diverse uses and night time activity may lead to unforeseen problems. Take for instance the fact that businesses on both streets have been able to re-use existing buildings creatively in order to expand commercial activity. Union Street entrepreneurs have opened businesses in the back yards of properties. Newbury Street merchants have opened shops below-grade in what once where storage rooms. Although these examples illustrate improved district complexity and economic activity, unanticipated problems may arise in terms of nuisances and urban design. Such examples are covered at the conclusion of this thesis.

Are Both Public And Private Places. (Lessons from Local Experience)

38 Source: Great Streets, p. 304.
40 Source: Death and Life of Great American Cities, p. 150.
41 Source: Lessons from Local Experience, p. 18.
Parking.* (Great Streets)

"Though present on more streets than not, auto parking in great amounts, to any contemporary standard, is not a characteristic of great streets. They seem to do well without enough."

Density

Density Helps.*(Great Streets)

"Void of human activity, streets soon cry out for people, they need people at the same time as they are for them, they are activated by people at the same time as they contribute to making a community for them. And that is achieved in considerable measure by having many people live along them or nearby- a matter of density."

Condition #4 For City Diversity. (Death and Life of Great American Cities)

"The district must have a sufficiently dense concentration of people, for whatever purpose they may be there. This includes people there because of residence."

Both Cow Hollow and Back Bay, the neighborhoods in which Union and Newbury Streets are located, are relatively dense.

Authenticity Of Place / Community Involvement

Authentic Places. (Lessons from Local Experience)

"Good places are authentic places. They reflect actual needs and are what they seem to be."

Local Meaning. (Lessons from Local Experience)

"Local meaning also ensures the uniqueness of a place and argues against the literal transfer of an idea from one context to another. Fashionable ideas such as historic preservation programs or "pedestrianization" strategies should not be imported wholesale, unless the need for them, as well as the specific setting, matches. A useful attitude is to be skeptical of the possibility of replicating a known project or process without thorough consultation with local interest groups."

Individual And Community Involvement. (Lessons from Local Experience)

"It follows that good places set the stage for both individual and community involvement. Design Processes must encourage local financial entities to participate

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42 Source: Great Streets, p. 306.
43 Source: Great Streets, p. 303.
44 Source: Death and Life of Great American Cities, p. 200.
45 For details on census tracts immediate to both districts turn to appendix.
46 Source: Lessons from Local Experience, p. 16.
47 Source: Lessons from Local Experience, p. 16.
48 Source: Lessons from Local Experience, p. 17.
in the activity early on. Furthermore, they must generate the political support for a long enough period to guarantee a project's success. 49

**More Than One Special Interest Group. (Lessons from Local Experience)**

"In good places, more than one special interest group must eventually be served, to prevent conflicts or segregation of people and activities in different areas of a city." 50

**Teaching Process. (Lessons from Local Experience)**

"Good design processes help nurture leadership for successive waves of change. These processes help participants eventually to share responsibility for operating and maintaining their city and to secure commitments that extend beyond the building stage." 51

**Learning Process. (Lessons from Local Experience)**

"Implementation phases should not be irreversibly locked in by the planning process. Built-in occasions for reassessment and learning not only allow for adapting places over time, but also for refining and improving as issues involved become more intimately known. Good urban environmental design processes must thus be judged by dual criteria: by the quality of places created and by the arrangements institutionalized through the process of designing. Over the long term, each is essential to local efforts to improve environments." 52

In terms of community involvement, both Union and Newbury Streets fair well because individuals and interest organizations are active in each neighborhood.

**Summary**

By referencing the above literature, I have attempted to establish that Union and Newbury Street are successful small to mid-scale commercial streets with an interesting landscape, mixed uses, and active residents who shape and sustain their environment. Although not perfect streets, they fair well measured against the literature. Having outlined this, I continue by proposing additional elements complemented by regulation and representation which have led to these streets’ success.

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49 Source: *Lessons from Local Experience*, p. 19.
50 Source: *Lessons from Local Experience*, p. 17.
51 Source: *Lessons from Local Experience*, p. 19.
52 Source: *Lessons from Local Experience*, p. 19.
UNION ST.

NEWBURY ST.

FIG.# 13
CHAPTER 3

The Need to Go Beyond

In terms of the aforementioned literature, both Union and Newbury Streets possess qualities that make for good environments. They have the physical attributes cited by Allan Jacobs and the use mixtures recommended by Jane Jacobs. Eury and Hack’s call for community participation is also met. However, the mere existence of such physical features does not equate with success. They can potentially be razed by developers to make way for large structures. Land use mixtures can also be jeopardized if a street goes unchecked. For example, the proliferation of one use such as bars minimizes diversity. In the former example, the uniqueness and character of the street is lost along with its pedestrian scale. In the latter case, the diversity of the street could be weakened- not to mention a potential increase in nuisances. Therefore, a need exists for regulation and representation protecting physical attributes and residents’ quality of living in addition to keeping a good mixture of uses.

Although good architecture, human scale, or use mixes currently exist, they can disappear. The protection of physical form and mixed uses in addition to group action must be interwoven for success because independently each piece can be destroyed by economic pressures. Commercial development issues are complex. Including active participatory groups recognizes the need to strike a balance between the interests of business owners and residents to have a good commercial street. Ensuring the existence of a pedestrian-oriented built environment and a good mixture in today’s economy can only be done through the necessary tools of regulation and representation. The development history of Union and Newbury Streets reveal that if given the opportunity, such successful streets could be ruined by their own success as economic pressures mount. These two streets are successful because various groups interact with guidelines as a protective measure. The brownstones of Newbury Street have been spared by the encroaching high spine- preventing the transformation of Back Bay into an anonymous area lacking pedestrian scale and details. A similar story has occurred on Union Street. (FIG.#16&17)

Successful commercial streets actually require the participation of groups whose interests appear to conflict on the surface. It is necessary to balance the needs of two association types: those of merchants and those of resident interests. Without a requisite merchant oriented group, Union and Newbury Street’s retail activity will be more difficult to realize due to lack of marketing and organized efforts. By having both types of groups active, the two streets are marketed on the one hand and protect the residents who bring life and diversity. Commercial success necessitates considering and acting for the interests of nearby residents.
Saving an Area From Its Own Success

Below follow the elements leading to the success of Union and Newbury Streets. The building blocks deal with physical features, land use, markets, locational factors, adaptability, sociability, regulatory mechanisms, and activism. Further in the thesis, differences in the practice of regulation and representation in San Francisco and Boston are highlighted to inform others about alternate approaches to resolving commercial development issues.

**Physical Features**

**Small Floorplates**
Small floor plates allow for unique businesses which attract people for their unique goods and services. Small store fronts break down the massiveness of a street’s facade. It reinforces variety in a “natural” and authentic context sought by Eury and Hack rather than the controlled environment of a large mall. Preserving small floorplates may discourage large shops from moving in because they lack space requirements.

**Architectural Form Has Human Scale**
A successful small to mid-scale commercial street possesses a human scale that provides the pedestrian with a visually comfortable environment on which to stroll.

**Contextualism**
A non-overwhelming environment is maintained when large, out of scale buildings do not break the rhythm and aesthetics of a street.

**Continuous Frontage**
In successful commercial streets, both shoppers and pedestrians need to feel there are a plethora of establishments to potentially patronize. Union and Newbury Streets have nearly continuous commercial frontage.

**Architectural Details**
Window treatments, doorways, metalwork, light fixtures and other features add visual interest to streetscapes.

**Land Use**

**A Mixture Of Store Types**
A mixture of storetypes and services in addition to residences attracts a variety of people to a street at different times of the day. This makes a street more exciting by adding life to it. Too much of one use may weaken a street.
Market

Unique Goods
Specialty retail districts attract shoppers (especially out of town visitors) that seek unique goods which can not easily be found in malls. If there is no product differentiation, why not go to a mall?

Tourist / Visitor Presence
Visitors bring in money and spread information about their visits to others by word of mouth. Tourists especially are interested in subjects such as architecture and history—both offered by places like Union and Newbury Streets. Jane Jacobs writes “The visitors sniff out where something vigorous exists already, and come to share it, thereby further supporting it."

Freedom From Retail Chains (to some degree)
Freedom from retail chains discourages the selling of goods that can be found anywhere. This makes the street unusual—thereby attracting attention. This feature seems to matter less on Newbury Street as chain stores are quite prominent there. It may be that since Newbury Street plays the role of a downtown street, freedom from retail chains is less important as they are expected. Nonetheless, some semblance of uniqueness is required.

Locational Factors

Adjacency
A successful small to mid-scale commercial district does not exist by itself. It is in near proximity to neighboring uses that add life and diversity to the street. Examples of such neighbors include: institutions, other commercial areas, hotels, and schools.

Perception Of High Income Nearby
Prospective shopkeepers feel comfortable opening shop when high incomes are found nearby."

Adaptability

Adaptability
Structures must occasionally be altered from their originally intended use in order to help create or enrich a viable commercial area. On Union and Newbury streets, parts of or entirely former residential buildings have been converted into commercial space. Some Union Street residential garages and back yards have been converted into stores. (FIG.#18) Formerly underground storage spaces on Newbury Street have been turned into basement shops.

53 Source: Death and Life of Great American Cities, p. 149.
54 The median income of households in the census tracts immediately surrounding both commercial districts is higher than that of each city’s average. For detail turn to appendix.
**Sociability**

*Pedestrian Traffic/ People Watching*

A successful commercial street requires pedestrian traffic from an economic viewpoint because the more people traversing the street, the more potential customers\(^{55}\). Furthermore, people enliven the streetscape. Successful streets are places to see and be seen. They are potential places for social interaction. One can initiate conversation with a stranger or remain anonymous in a crowd.

**Regulatory Mechanisms**

*Regulation Overlay*

A regulation overlay is the basic step to achieving a healthy mixture of store types as a local municipality defines as-of-right and conditional uses relative to appropriateness in the neighborhood.

**Design Guidelines**

Guidelines that protect human scale, contextualism, continuous frontage, architectural detail, adaptability, and history are necessary to prevent their destruction at the hands of economic pressure and their being replaced with anonymous structures.

**Activism**

*Active Interest Groups*

An active group that represents merchant interests in addition to one representing residents is needed for the success of a commercial street. The two balance each other out and improve conditions for merchants and residents. By marketing the street, it is more likely to prosper financially. On the other hand, neighborhood groups protect the quality of life in the neighborhood from over-commercialization. Residents are essential to keeping a healthy mix in the area as they bring it life.

**History**

Tied in with the attraction of architecture is that of history. When people come to Union and Newbury Streets they are not just consuming a good, but an experience. A city street possesses a past that can not be authentically replicated by a mall.

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\(^{55}\) Newbury Street enjoyed a higher pedestrian volume on both days pedestrian counts were conducted. For detail and method turn to appendix.
2001 UNION STREET

NEWBURY ST.
FIG # 17
CHAPTER 4

Negative Impacts from Development and Response

Three general types of negative impacts are cited as having resulted from the commercial development of Union and Newbury Street: increased rents, nuisances, and change of neighborhood character.

High commercial rents on both streets may make running a business more costly and drive out local neighborhood-serving merchants. Businesses must be very successful from the start to stay open. Turnovers on Union Street usually occur due to lack of working capital and experience. Mr. Banani of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay mentions “small grocery stores and businesses can not afford to be on Newbury Street any more.” As a result of high rents, it is the chains and corporations with deep pockets that can afford to open shop there. Similarly, there is concern over the loss of renters and those of lower income in the neighborhood.

Nuisances stemming from different sources plague nearby residents of Union and Newbury Streets. Union Street’s reputation as a singles areas, garnered in the 1970’s, to this day causes problems for locals. One main complaint is that of the vagrancy caused by bar patrons. They are sometimes rowdy, damage property, and cause other trouble when the bars close at 2AM. Similarly, Back Bay residents are concerned with and would like to limit the number of alcohol licenses granted in the neighborhood. Other nuisance related topics for Newbury Street include congestion and trash bins abutting residences which attract rats. Lastly, it is difficult to find parking on Union and Newbury Streets.

Changes perceived to be caused by commercial development alarm surrounding neighbors. On Union Street, the conversion of second story residential space into retail or office uses de-emphasizes the residential component of the street. A concern also exists that the stable family character of the neighborhood is being transformed as newcomers are typically perceived as young singles. A similar concern exists on Newbury Street as some neighborhood people feel the area is becoming over run by youths. The loss of families in a neighborhood is perceived as detrimental because young people are associated with a transitory nature.

In response to such aforementioned negative impacts, Union and Newbury Streets have been maintained differently through regulation and representation. Examples of the different approaches to regulation and representation on Union and Newbury Streets follow.

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56 Source: Interview with Joseph Kissell, McGuire Real Estate.
Union Street Regulation

In general, the Union Street Guidelines aim at fostering contextualism and pedestrian scale in development in addition to “improving the economic base of the street.” Flexibility is provided as guidelines do not mandate replication of architecture from another era, but attempt to make certain that new buildings and renovations harmonize with the old.

Examples Of Protecting Vital Elements On Union Street Via Regulation

Protecting Contextuality

- New construction should respond to the intrinsic visual qualities of structures and spaces which surround it. Building height, width, mass, proportion, materials, colors and textures can affect the degree of visual compatibility between the old and the new design. (P. 29)
- There should be no recessed arcades and canopies and signs should not extend beyond the property line. (P. 33)
- The absence of setbacks should be preserved. (P. 34)
- New buildings should be built up to the property line. Those older existing ones should be considered the few exceptions. (P. 34)
- Show windows should generally not extend down to the sidewalk level and should have tile, marble, or painted wood splash panels similar to those on other Union Street shop fronts. (P. 35)
- Nearly all the buildings on Union and Fillmore Streets have facades of painted wood. Painted clapboard surfaces are the most appropriate for both most vintage buildings and all new construction. (P. 42)
- Color schemes for both existing and new buildings, no matter what their exterior materials, should be subdued and quiet. Generally no facade should utilize more than three principal colors, but additional colors may be used as accents. Only one light color should predominate in any color scheme. Intense colors should be reserved for window sash and trim. (P. 42)

Protecting Small Floor Plates (and simulating their appearance)

- The guidelines aim to keep the small lot size by discouraging either the consolidation of two lots into a larger one (unless it is broken down) or the subdivision of a lot’s frontage into less than a 25 foot width. (P. 31)
- Floor areas should be limited to 2,500 square feet and frontages should be limited to 25 linear feet. (P. 33)

57 Source: Union Street Design Guidelines, p. 23.
58 Source: Union Street Design Guidelines.
Protecting Adaptability

- Backyards should be preserved because some can be incorporated into commercial spaces. However, these should not disturb neighbors in terms of noise, odor, etcetera. (P. 33)

Protecting Continuous Frontage

- At least 70% of any new or remodeled ground floor facing Union and Fillmore Streets should be for shop fronts, including show windows, entrances, or shop vestibules. Such show windows should be visually continuous with their neighbors in order to create uninterrupted visual interest for the pedestrian and shopper and should extend to the street frontage. (P. 35)

Protecting Transparency and Architectural Details

- Shop fronts may have large plate-glass windows with appropriate metal or wood frames, except where inconsistent with the original appearance of the building or existing architecturally significant elements. Metal Frames must be the same in appearance and dimensions as wood windows. In no case are mill-finish aluminum windows or door frames appropriate. (P. 35)
- Glass should be transparent; wire or otherwise obstructed glass is in appropriate. Stainglass is permitted. If security glass is used, it should be of glass and laminated plastic of such a kind as to be ordinarily indistinguishable from common plate glass.” (P. 35)
- Shop doors should generally be mostly glass with wood frames, or wooden paneled doors of the period of the buildings. The detailing of the doors should enhance and not detract from the architectural character of the building and the street. Exposed metal (including mill-finish or unanodized aluminum) doors should not be used. (P. 36)

Protecting Residents from Commercial Development

- Residential properties abutting Union street should be protected from the impacts of exterior mechanical equipment. All exterior mechanical equipment such as vents, air conditioners, exhausts, fans, refrigeration systems, odor filters or scrubbers, etc., should be installed at the point which is furthest from contiguous residential property. In general, this should be on the roof of the building at the commercial frontage. Such equipment should be places below the line of sight or masked by architectural elements appropriate to the design of the building. (P. 45)
- Noise-generating equipment should be of the quietest type available, encased in baffles that direct the sound upwards rather than horizontally, be properly maintained, and if set to operate in cycles, operate for the minimal amount of time needed. (P. 45)
- Kitchen exhausts, manufacturing activities, or any other odor producing activities should be filtered to prevent intrusion of odors in to adjacent properties. (P. 45)
- All lots, yards, buildings, fences, and landscaping (including street trees) should be properly maintained and not permitted to become unsightly. (P. 51)
- On-site trash bins or holding areas should be screened from view by attractive solid fences or walls made of durable materials such as masonry, or solid wood, and should
be equipped with doors and hardware sufficient to withstand rugged use. Alleys or passageways with trash containers should be provided with opaque doors to screen such spaces from view. (P. 51)

- Outdoor storage of garbage, particularly at the rear of the restaurants that abut residential properties, is appropriate. Trash and bottles should not be dumped between the hours of 10PM and 9AM. Visual nuisances such as unsightly accumulation of goods or materials is in appropriate.

**Other Ordinances**

- In addition to the Union Street Architectural Guidelines, two important ordinances have been enacted in San Francisco: one protects the mix of shops on Union Street and the other is geared towards enlivening its pedestrian orientation. The ordinance dealing with use mixture limits the number of restaurants and bars that are allowed in the Union Street Commercial District. The statute dealing with pedestrian concerns encourages outdoor dining and cafe seating by allowing tables and chairs to be placed in the public right of way during business hours. Such intrusion, usually not permitted, is overlooked as guidelines are adopted in conjunction with the ordinance.

**Union Street Representation**

The Union Street Association played an important part both in the creation of the Architectural Guidelines and currently in their execution. A motion of the planning commission reads “Responding to visual concerns, the department recommended that the Union Street Committee, an established group of neighborhood residents, merchants and property owners, produce an architectural survey, develop design criteria, and establish a design review board which could review new plans and work with developers.” The survey, a product of collaboration between the Union Street Committee, the San Francisco Planning Department, and design professionals was released May 1, 1981. It ultimately served as the basis for the Union Street Design Guidelines.

In accepting the guidelines, the planning commission set up a notification procedure that allows the Union Street Committee to review proposals on the street and provide input. The commission resolution reads “The Commission finds that the Union Street Committee, using these design guidelines, can provide the initial review of all new projects, to determine if a project has potentially detrimental effects and then request discretionary review, if necessary.”

Upon receiving a development proposal, the planning department notifies the Union Street Committee of the request and forwards supporting materials. The project application is placed on hold with the planning department for a 20 day period during which the Union Street Committee reviews construction drawings. Unless the planning department receives a written objection from the Union Street Committee concerning the project within the 20 day period, the project is approved.

60 Source: *Union Street Design Guidelines*, p. 20.
**Examples of Representation in Action on Union Street**

**Marketing the Commercial Street**

- Union Street Association sponsors special events such as: a Spring Festival, an Easter Parade, and benefits for children.
- Union Street Association self funds and publishes a shopping and dining guide, also collaborating with the San Francisco Visitors and Convention Bureau.
- The Union Street Association has established committees on: advertisement and promotion, membership, the organization newsletter, festivals, and the shopping and dining guide.

**Improving Street and Living Quality**

- Union Street Association has established a street beautification committee.
- Volunteers from the Association participate in Neighborhood Sweep Days in which streets are cleaned and graffiti is removed.
- The Association hires homeless persons to assist in cleaning Union Street sidewalks and caring for flower beds.
- Association merchants organize a schedule in which responsibilities for watering plants and trees are shared.
- The Association participates in tree plantings in conjunction with Friends of the Urban Forest.
- The Association lobbies city hall for public waste receptacles and other amenities.
- The Association has established a planning and zoning committee.
- Cow Hollow Neighbors in Action, a grassroots neighbors’ organization, addresses any pertinent issues of concern to the neighborhood as they arise. The organization operates through phone calls, petitions, and letters. Its monetary resources are pooled towards fighting for neighborhood issues.
- Cow Hollow Neighbors in Action maintains standing committees on senior citizen issues, crime, transportation, and landmarking of buildings.

**Mitigating Negative Impacts of Commercial Development**

- Union Street Association acts as a consultant to prospective shop owners, thereby easing their entry into a difficult market in which to run a business.
- Organized merchants and residents persuaded the Board of Supervisors’ into imposing a one year moratorium on bars, restaurants, and entertainment applications in Cow Hollow during the late 1970’s. This ultimately led to the creation of the first special use district in San Francisco.

**Newbury Street Regulation**

The purpose of the Back Bay Architectural Commission reads:“(a) to promote the economic, cultural, educational and general welfare of the public through high standards of design throughout the Back Bay and through the preservation of the residential portion of the Back Bay area in the City of Boston; (b) to safeguard the heritage of the City of Boston by preventing the despoliation of a district in that city which reflects important elements of its cultural, social, economic, and political history; (c) to stabilize and

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61 Source: Interviews with Lesley Leonhardt and Pat Vaughey.
strengthen residential property values in such area; (d) to foster civic beauty; and (e) to strengthen the economy of the Commonwealth and City of Boston.62n

Examples Of Protecting Vital Elements On Newbury Street Via Regulation63

Protecting Contextuality and Architectural Details

YARD DEPRESSIONS (Newbury Street)

- In blocks with few depressed yards, a minimum amount of excavation is generally preferred. Access to the depressed area should be from the original entrance walkway, whenever possible, in order to maintain the rhythm of walkways and yards. Planting and/or fencing should be maintained along the entire street frontage of the depressed area, and landscaping is encouraged. Retaining walls should be masonry compatible in color with the existing building masonry. Excavations of front yards for basement conversions are discouraged between Hereford Street and Massachusetts Avenue. (P.5)

AWNING AND ENTRANCE CANOPIES

- Allowed if well maintained and made of fabric-like materials (e.g., canvas). Shapes and locations should relate to facade openings in order not to obscure architectural details. Individual awnings for each window are preferred. Awnings and canopies for basement entrances are discouraged. No awning or canopy may extend beyond the street lot line. (P. 5)

SHOP WINDOWS: (basement and first floor conversions of dwellings to shops)

- It is intended that the original rhythm of bays, entrances, fenestration, and decorative elements be maintained. Flat Facade: The first floor windows may be increased in height. Basement windows may be enlarged, but they should align with, and in no case exceed the size of the first floor windows. Basement walls should be masonry to match existing stonework as closely as possible. Glass should be mounted in the plane of the original glass. Projecting Masonry Bays: A projecting bay used for display of merchandise may be replaced on the first floor and/or basement levels by a predominantly glass bay subject to the following conditions: The plan of the new bay must conform to the plan of the original bay as closely as possible; supporting columns replacing existing masonry should be of a large enough cross section to appear visually to support the masonry above. (P. 6)

EXISTING STOREFRONTS

- Remodeling of existing storefronts is allowed provided that: the remodeling is compatible with the overall architectural character of the building; existing major architectural features are given recognition; the existing architectural detailing within the storefront area is retained as much as possible. In such remodeling, good contemporary commercial design is encouraged. (P. 6)

63 Source: Back Bay Architectural District Business Sector Guidelines.
FENCES
- Existing compatible fences and stone curbing around planted areas should be retained. Where these are missing and new fences are needed, fences should be durable so as to be able to withstand normal abuse. Fences should be largely transparent, with dimensions and spacing of posts and rails similar to those of original fences typical elsewhere in the District. In all cases, the design should be compatible with the nature of the materials selected. Color should be of a dark value, such as black or a darker version of approved trim color. Light colors are discouraged. (P. 10)

PAVING
- For walkways and other pedestrian use areas, the Commission encourages the use of paving materials and patterns characteristic of the period when the structure on the property was constructed. For most lots, red brick pavers are recommended, but smooth dressed stone and rough surface tile pavers may also be appropriate. (P. 10)

SIGNS
- The design of signs within the District must be approached with care. Great importance is placed on the relationship of a sign to the facade on which it is located. A sign must be designed for careful integration with the architectural features. Its size and proportions must relate to the fenestration and detailing of the building. (P. 12)
- The Commission expects that signs which are allowable under these guidelines and are visible from both the street and sidewalk will satisfy the legitimate needs of commerce without visual clutter and without interference with the views of buildings and other signs. (P. 12)
- The Commission may recommend exceptions to the code or may impose additional restrictions as indicated in these guidelines. (P. 12)
- In accordance with the Boston Sign Code, the maximum total area for all signs on a building on this street (Newbury) is two feet multiplied by the width of the shop frontage measured in feet. Basement and first floor shops located in the same building must share this total sign allotment; individual tenants must negotiate with each other and their landlord. Signs which obscure significant architectural detail are generally not approved. The use of raised letters applied directly to the building face is encouraged.
- The following signs can usually be used: 1) freestanding showcases (though generally not encouraged) and 2) Applied Signs (may be placed no higher than the sill of the second floor windows). Projecting signs placed at a right angle to the building face generally are limited to 6 square feet, with a 4-foot maximum projection from the building and placement no higher than the sill of the second floor windows. (P. 13)

LETTERING
- Light-colored letters no more than 6 inches high on a dark background are preferred. No more than two typefaces will generally be allowed. Product trademarks are discouraged. (P. 15)
FREESTANDING
Low horizontal freestanding sign; usually allowed only to identify businesses located below grade; can be placed at a right angle to the street lot line along the edge of the entrance walkway, with a maximum area of 6 square feet and the top of the sign a maximum of 4 feet 6 inches above the sidewalk grade. A horizontal format is preferred. Usually only one such sign will be allowed per building, although a sign may be divided to advertise two businesses. Placement on or above a fence or planting is encouraged. (P. 15)

LIGHTING
- Back-lighting is usually not permitted. Shielded incandescent lights attached to the top of a sign are encouraged. (P. 15)

SIGNS ON CANOPIES AND AWNINGS
- Signs on canopies and awnings are allowed provided their total area is included in the total allowed sign area and their lettering is consistent in style and color with other building signs. (P. 15)

MASONRY: PAINTING AND CLEANING
- It is the intent of these guidelines that the original colors used in the District be restored unless it can be demonstrated that an original color was incompatible with the others at the time of construction. (P. 8)
- All color changes require the approval of the Commission. (P. 8)

PAINTING: DOORS, WINDOWS, AND TRIM
- New metal frames and other metal components should be prefinished in a dark color approximating the approved trim color used elsewhere on the building. (P. 8)

FACADE CHANGES
- Not generally allowed except as specified in these guidelines. The covering or removal of original facade elements (columns, pilasters, fenestrations, arches, lintels, decorative elements) is generally discouraged except as discussed elsewhere in these guidelines. (P. 4)

DEMOLITION
- Not generally allowed on Newbury Street. (P. 4)

ENTRANCES: FIRST FLOOR CONVERSIONS TO SHOPS
- Access to a first floor shop should be from the original building entrance lobby. New separate exterior entrances will generally be discouraged. Access to a basement shop may be from a depressed yard. (P. 4)
Newbury Street Representation

The Back Bay Architectural Commission possesses the authoritative word on development while the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB) provides unofficial recommendations to both the commission and applicants. NABB engages with applicants prior to commission hearings and informs the party of NABB’s position. Letters of agreements outlining uses are signed with applicants if NABB bestows its support.

Examples of Representation in Action on Newbury Street64

Marketing the Commercial Street
- Newbury Street League publishes a brochure of the street’s businesses and interacts with visiting media.
- Newbury Street League holds fundraising events with organizations like the Boston Ballet.

Improving Street and Living Quality
- NABB has established committees on: crime, graffiti, street cleaning, street lighting, recycling, and rodent control.
- The Clarendon Street Playground is maintained and improved by NABB volunteers for area residents.
- NABB volunteers take care of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall and financially support its upkeep.
- NABB runs a voter participation committee.
- NABB actively meets with city officials on neighborhood issues.
- NABB helps sponsor the planting of street trees.
- NABB holds opens forums on topics relevant to neighbors.
- NABB coordinates Alley Rally Day in which residents clean the neighborhood.

Mitigating Negative Impacts of Commercial Development
- NABB established a licensing and building use committee to monitor requests for alcohol licenses and bars.
- NABB organizes the Friends and Neighbors Program which consists of over 20 special interest groups in which neighbors can participate and meet each other. Topics range from skiing to photography. By organizing such interest groups, community is strengthened.

64 Source: Newbury Street League Press Kit and NABB pamphlet.
CHAPTER 5

Lessons To Be Learned

The organizations and mechanisms active at Union and Newbury Streets provide insight into how policy tools may work and potential problems which arise when executing regulation to protect a street from its own success. The issues raised by the following lessons should be pondered by policy writers and merchant and resident groups alike.

Lessons To Be Learned From Union Street:

Living Environment Issues

1) Commercial development sometimes creates negative externalities such as noise and other nuisances which are experienced by abutting neighbors. Cow Hollow residents complain of rowdy bar patrons who occasionally damage property when the bars close at 2AM. Support equipment for commercial uses may also emit noise and unpleasant odors. Union Street Design Guidelines address the nuisances posed by mechanical support equipment. Similar guidelines may be considered elsewhere to tackle the same problems.

Regulatory Issues

2) Thresholds written into code can be used to limit particular types of establishments on a street in order to protect its use mixture. A specified number of bars and restaurants are allowed in the commercial district. More than the allotted number of establishments existed when the statute was passed. When these supplementary establishments shut down, no new bars or restaurants can take their place.

3) Preoccupation over the conversion of residential space into commercial uses presents a quandary in terms of those with disabilities. Upper story residential spaces have illegally been turned into office or commercial space. A city statute mandates that owners of illegally converted residential units must return spaces to residential uses or apply for a commercial use permit. As a commercial use, establishments would be subject to city codes dealing with accessibility in addition to potentially not complying with the American with Disabilities Act. Remodeling for accessibility is expensive for owners. The problem lies in the fact that the city desires to save existing properties but it may be cheaper to construct new, accessible structures.

Adaptability Issues

4) Adaptability is important for the continued survival of a commercial street. Spaces not originally intended for commercial uses may provide unique environs in which to shop or obtain services. However, such adapted space may pose problems in terms of access and visibility to the potential patron. Steep stairs in lower level shops may

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65 Passed July 26, 1991, lack of access to those with disabilities is a federal crime for which a plaintiff may sue.

66 Source: Interview with Joseph Kissel, McGuire Real Estate.
discourage potential customers. Backyard businesses accessed through former work entrances are not as visible as those sharing continuous frontage.

**Market Issues**
5) Residents and merchants must prioritize the desire for unique establishments against the economic viability of the street. High rents which close down locally owned operations can be an unattractive by-product of a successful commercial district. Vacancies may tempt landlords to lease space to retail chains. Is having a restaurant or chain store on the street better than a vacancy or waiting for the opening of a unique shop? Groups active in commercial districts must weigh the costs and benefits of the question.

**Sociability Issues**
6) Legislation allowing cafe furniture to encroach onto the public right of way to enliven the street can be passed. Such legislation addresses furniture arrangement during business hours and related issues. In drafting these ordinances, policy writers must be aware of relative sidewalk widths and other streetscape objects which may inhibit pedestrian circulation.

**Action Approach**
7) Neighborhood resistance against the infiltration of chain stores can be successful. However, residents cannot prevent a business from opening because of franchise status or type of ownership. Residents must control the negative impacts of uses such as congestion, pollution, and nuisances.
8) A merchant association can play a quasi-official role in the approval of projects in a commercial district. Union Street Architectural Guidelines have been adopted into the review process of the planning commission but are not a codified section of the city planning code. The planning department forwards proposals to the Union Street Association. If the association raises opposition, discretionary review before the planning commission is triggered. Otherwise, a project is approved at the end of a specified period.
Lessons To Be Learned From Newbury Street:

Living Environment Issues

1) Abutting neighbors face problems such as rodents attracted to trash dumpsters left in the public alley behind Newbury Street. NABB has addressed this problem through the formation of a rodent control committee.

2) The excavation and conversion of storage spaces into store fronts can lead to a diminished floor plane and loss of greenery along the street’s transition zone. Below grade shops can also pose obstacles in terms of trash accumulation and personal safety. (FIG.#19)

Regulatory Issues

3) It may be argued that design controls utilized in the name of preservation interfere with the creation of commercially viable spaces as old window frames are inadequate for marketing purposes. On the one hand, value is created by retaining the architectural detailing and character of an area. Despite these contentions, a more basic dilemma endures. Maintaining older buildings means safeguarding structures designed at a time when accessibility considerations were less emphasized. Does a law protecting an original facade supersede one mandating access to those in wheelchairs or even parents with children in strollers? Policy shapers must be aware of such conflicts.

4) Controls banning exterior signs above the second story may avoid visual clutter but not necessarily boost a shop’s business as it is more difficult to advertise. Cultivating a residential image on the upper stories of buildings shifts signage to ground level or in entryways.

5) Revisions to guidelines may be written as need warrants. Updated guidelines will deal with issues not sufficiently addressed in the original version: a) shifting from a double hung sash to windows offering unobstructed views, b) basement excavations, c) outdoor dining areas and furnishings, and d) handouts on acceptable awning design.

Adaptability Issues

6) It is sometimes difficult to discern which Newbury Street homes have been converted into commercial uses. This lack of clarity is partially due to sign restrictions and the fact some establishments are harder to see as they are found in the rear of buildings.

Market Issues

7) Opening shop on a street like Newbury affords freedom to their owners. However, it is relatively more difficult to organize resources as merchants need not contribute to a merchant or tenant organization as is typical in malls.

Action Approach

8) Groups representing resident interests can play an influential yet unofficial role in the approval of development proposals and mitigation of nuisances in a district. The importance of this statement is underscored when examining the Back Bay Architectural Commission’s limitations. When establishing a design commission, the scope of its jurisdiction must be recognized. The Back Bay Architectural Commission is limited as it
does not review uses. The commission deals only with the physical exterior of buildings. The business’s use is only considered if it affects the exterior of the building. Therefore, nuisances such as noise and odor are officially out of the Back Bay Architectural Commission’s jurisdiction. Some presence is needed to fill this void. As a result, group representation is necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

I have attempted to argue that regulation and representation have been integral to the continued success of Union and Newbury Streets. As illustrated in San Francisco and Boston, the approach to and relationship between guidelines and representation enacted to save a street from its own success can differ yet achieve the same ultimate results. In conclusion, it must be noted that the design guidelines themselves and the method by which they are enacted may raise complicated issues resulting from contradictory policy. The handful of examples I listed are but products of the streets in the two particular cities I examined. Streets in other cities may pose similar or different problems resulting from regulatory mechanisms and bodies. Studying problems related to the integration of regulation and representation warrants further research.
APPENDIX

Research Method

I began my thesis research by walking through, observing, and analyzing each commercial street of interest and the immediate vicinity. I then selected literature on streets, commercial development, and the histories of each respective city. My next step was outlining the types of individuals I wished to interview. I had two sets of interviews for my thesis: a number of more in-depth interviews with individuals who I felt could give me insights into each respective street, and numerous brief interviews with merchants on the street. For my in-depth interviews, I spoke with the heads of neighborhood and merchant groups, planning officials, real estate brokers, and residents. With these individuals, I called them up beforehand and set up appointments to interview them. Due to time constraints, I limited the number of merchants I spoke with. For my interviews I alternated the side of the street I was conducting merchant interviews on. For example, I began by speaking with merchants on the north side of a block. When completed with the block, I then moved to the south side of the next block. In order to further save time, I would attempt to interview every fourth door down on one side of a block. In case the merchant was unwilling to speak or was busy, I would go on to the next shop and continue counting down from that one. I conducted these interviews during mid-mornings and afternoons, in order to avoid coming too soon after opening or right before closing. In each case I introduced myself as an MIT student and briefly explained the nature of my project. I geared the interview to last less than two minutes, although on several occasions some merchants were willing to be quite generous with their time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Area (square miles)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cow Hollow Census Tracts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>4,117</td>
<td>.2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Back Bay Census Tracts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>108</td>
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**Adjacent Area Income Data**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Median Income</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>San Francisco</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cow Hollow Census Tracts</td>
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<tr>
<td>128</td>
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<td>107</td>
<td>$40,888</td>
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<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>$43,686</td>
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</table>
Pedestrian Count

I also conducted a simple pedestrian count in order to compare the street’s activity. I conducted counts at four stations on Union Street. In most examples, I observed the northwest corner of an intersection with the exception of Fillmore. In this case I studied the north east corner because this is where I felt the frontage of the commercial district “turned right.” The four locations are strategically located. I had one station at the 100% corner in terms of real estate value, and at two blocks to the east and west. At each station I counted pedestrians in any direction for 15 minutes within an imaginary box at the corner. If a person were to turn around within the box and go in the opposite direction or come back a few minutes later, she is counted again. On the occasion when a pedestrian did not step within the box because she stepped out of the crosswalk in order to get on the sidewalk, she was counted as long as it was clear to me that she was going in the same direction had she stepped into the box. I conducted these pedestrian counts on both a weekday (day 1) and weekend (day 2) in order to see if there was any significant change. Although weather most likely played a factor in the numbers, I did this in order to get a general sense of what a comparison of the two streets reveals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedestrian Count:</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corner 1 (Buchanan):</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner 2 (Octavia):</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner 3 (Fillmore):</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1 Weather: Partly Cloudy, Comfortable</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2 Weather: Drizzle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedestrian Count:</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corner 1 (Arlington)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner 2 (Clarendon)</td>
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<td>445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corner 3 (Exeter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corner 4 (Gloucester)</td>
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<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner 5 (Massachusetts Ave.)</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1 Weather: cool and comfortable, about 45 degrees and a white sky</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2 Weather: clear blue sky, warm in the sun and cold in the wind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewees
Lesley Leonhardt, Union Street Association.
Allan Levy, AIA. Consultant for Union Street Association.
Joan Jolley, Newbury Street League.
Joseph Kissel, McGuire Real Estate, San Francisco.
Farshid Banani, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay.
Elaine Anderson, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay.
William Young, Back Bay Architectural Commission.
Scott Dowdee, San Francisco Planning Department.
Thomas Maistros, Boston Redevelopment Authority.
Bob David, Golden Gate Valley Neighborhood Association.
Pat Vaughey, Cow Hollow Neighbors in Action.
Perry Butler, Perry’s Restaurant.
Tim Locke, RM Bradley, Boston.
Interview Questions

1/25/96 Interview with Joseph Kissel

1) How long have you practiced real estate in the Union Street Commercial District? What type of properties do you and your firm handle?

2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Union Street Commercial District Market? What contributes to these strengths and weaknesses?

3) Why do businesses invest and set up shop there?

4) What areas / markets are Union Street’s competitors?

5) Are there any development patterns that have benefited or hurt the Union Street Commercial District?

6) Are you aware of any special zoning laws regulating this district in recent years? Have they had an effect on business in the district? What kind of effects? 

7) Have you observed a large turnover in businesses in the district? What type of businesses have left? What types of businesses have moved in? Why?

8) Have any of your clients seeking to locate in this district been unable to find a suitable location? Why? What types of businesses do these clients operate? Did they find suitable locations elsewhere? In what district?

9) Where is the 100% corner in the Union Street Commercial District?

10) What is the average turnover rate for commercial properties on Union Street?

11) What is the average turnover rate for residential properties on Union Street?

12) What are the typical terms of a lease on Union Street?

13) What is the typical size of a commercial establishment on Union Street?

14) What are the principal factors which have affected the average rent level on Union Street?

15) Can you give me an estimate of current commercial rents per square foot on Union Street?

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67 Question taken from questionnaire in Economic Assessment of Neighborhood Commercial Rezoning.
68 Question taken from questionnaire in Economic Assessment of Neighborhood Commercial Rezoning.
16) How does this compare with other areas in San Francisco?

17) Can you give me an estimate of current residential rents per square foot on Union Street?

18) How does this compare with other areas in San Francisco?

19) What is your estimate of the vacancy rate in the Union Street Commercial District?

20) How does this compare with other areas in San Francisco?

21) Do rents or vacancy rates vary by the floor on which they are located? By how much? Do they vary by location on Union Street? By how much?

22) Can you give me an estimate how the aforementioned indicators have performed at benchmarks of importance such as the earthquake of 1989?
Interview with Thomas Maistros

1) What is your title? How long have you been involved with Newbury Street?

2) What are the similarities and differences between Newbury Street and Boston’s other commercial districts in general?

3) How much of Newbury Street is currently commercial? How much of Newbury Street is currently residential?

4) What are Newbury Street’s strengths and weaknesses? What contributes to this?

5) What are the issues which concern the BRA in regards to Newbury street? Have they changed over time? How so?

6) Has the character of Newbury Street always been as it is today? What has it been like in the past?

7) What role has the BRA historically played and currently plays in the development of Newbury Street?

8) Can you give me an overall framework of how development is controlled on Newbury Street?

9) How have people reacted to the BRA’s policy concerning Newbury Street?

10) What is the rationale for the high-rise and mid-rise buildings adjacent to the Back Bay? Has this area of development affected Newbury Street? How?

11) Are there any development patterns or regulations that have either benefited or hurt Newbury Street?

12) Newbury Street seems to have developed into two different streets. What forces do you feel have led to this split?
Interview with Farshid Banani

1) How long have you lived in the area and been involved with NABB?

2) What are the goals of NABB? How are these goals achieved?

3) Could you tell me about the role of your organization in the development process?

4) Can you give me a brief outline of how Newbury Street came to be what it is today?

5) What was Newbury Street like before the Prudential and other complexes appeared in the neighborhood?

6) What are the strengths and weaknesses of Newbury Street? What contributes to this?

7) What are the issues revolving around Newbury Street which currently concern residents of the immediate areas and Back Bay. Have these concerns changed over time?

8) What has been the relationship between the development of Newbury Street, the BRA, and other regulatory bodies and ordinances?

9) Are there any development patterns or regulations that have benefited or hurt Newbury Street?

10) How and when did the specialty chain shops begin to appear on Newbury Street? What was the neighborhood and merchant reaction to them?

11) Do you recall or know of neighbors’ reaction to the construction of large buildings on Newbury street such as Tower Records, Boston Architectural Commission, and the New England Life Insurance Building?

12) Have there been any recent controversial proposals or land uses on Newbury Street?
Interview with Allan Levy

1) What is your title in relation to Union Street affairs? How long have you been involved with Union Street?

2) Could you give me a brief overview of documents which guide the development of the Union Street Commercial District? When were they published?

3) What is the relationship between the planning department’s special use districts, codes, and the Union Street Guidelines?

4) Are there any recent zoning laws or regulations that have had an effect on business? What kind of effect have they had?

5) Are there any development patterns that have benefited or hurt the Union Street Commercial district?

6) Could you give me an overview of the issues, difficulties, controversies, and successes you have encountered in preserving the environment.

7) Has Union Street attempted to make a pedestrian friendly environment? How has it succeeded? How has it failed?

8) Could you cite some examples of businesses located in the rear of lots?

9) Have any new buildings been constructed since the passing of the guidelines?

10) Could you please cite new successfully constructed buildings?

11) Could you please cite not so successfully newly constructed buildings?

12) Could you please cite successfully renovated buildings?

13) Could you please cite not so successfully renovated buildings?
Interview with William Young

1) What is your title? How long have you been involved with Newbury Street?

2) What were the factors or concerns that led to the founding of the Back Bay Architectural Guidelines? Have these concerns changed over time? How so?

3) Has the character of Newbury Street always been as it is today? What was it like before the guidelines in the past?

4) Which of the current Back Bay Architectural Commission guidelines for Newbury Street have been the most effective?

5) Which of the current Back Bay Architectural Commission guidelines for Newbury Street have been the least effective?

6) Why are the guidelines being changed? What parts of the guidelines are being changed? Can you give me the reasoning behind the proposed changes?

7) Are there any development patterns or regulation that have benefited or hurt Newbury Street?

8) Were the Back Bay Architectural Commission Guidelines imposed on Newbury Street all at once or incrementally?

9) Do you feel there is any relationship between the Back Bay Architectural Commission Guidelines and my perception that Newbury street has two distinct characters?

10) Have any new buildings been constructed since the passing of the guidelines? What was the public reaction to them?

11) Could you please cite successfully renovated buildings?

12) Could you please cite not so successfully renovated buildings?

13) Could you please cite some successfully newly constructed buildings?
Interview with Scott Dowdee

1) What is your title? How long have you been involved with San Francisco Commercial Districts?

2) What are the similarities and differences between Union Street Commercial District and San Francisco's other commercial districts in general?

3) What are the Union Street Commercial District's strengths and weaknesses? What contributes to this?

4) What are the issues which concern the planning department in regards to the Union Street Commercial District? Have they changed over time? How so?

5) What role has the planning department historically and currently played in the development of the Union Street Commercial District? How have people in the Union Street Commercial District reacted to department policy or philosophy?

6) Are there any development patterns or regulations that have either benefited or hurt the Union Street Commercial District? Has any action been taken to address this?

7) What have been the results / effects of rezoning in 1987?
Interview with Tim Locke

1) How long have you practiced real estate dealing with Newbury Street Properties? What type of properties do you and your firm handle?

2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Newbury Street Market? What contributes to these strengths and weaknesses?

3) Why do businesses invest and set up shop on Newbury Street?

4) What areas / markets are Newbury Street’s competitors?

5) Are there any development patterns that have benefited or hurt the Newbury Street and its businesses?

6) Have you observed a large turnover in businesses on Newbury Street? What type of businesses have left? What types of businesses have moved in? Why?

7) Have any of your clients seeking to locate on Newbury Street been unable to find a suitable location? Why? What types of businesses do these clients operate? Did they find suitable locations elsewhere? In what district?69

69 Question taken from questionnaire in Economic Assessment of Neighborhood Commercial Rezoning
Interview with Joan Jolley

1) What is your title? How long have you been associated with the Newbury Street League?

2) What are the goals of the Newbury Street League? How are these goals achieved?

3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of Newbury Street? What contributes to this?

4) What are the issues which currently concern Newbury Street residents and merchants? Have these concerns changed over time?

5) What has been the relationship between the development of Newbury Street, the BRA, and other regulatory bodies?

6) How and when did the specialty shops begin to appear on Newbury Street?

7) Are there any development patterns that have benefited or hurt Newbury Street?

8) Can you give me an overview of the businesses in Newbury Street and how they have changed over time? Are there any particular reasons for such trends?

9) Can you estimate the current turnover period for an establishment? How have turnover periods behaved over time? What types of businesses have folded?

10) Are there any events of note that have affected Newbury street positively or negatively? How and why?

11) What age are the typical patrons of Newbury Street establishments?
Merchant Interviews Boston

1) How long has your establishment been in business on Newbury Street?

2) Why did you select to open shop on Newbury Street as opposed to elsewhere?

3) Has Newbury Street been conducive to running a successful business or does it present any particular difficulties?

4) What has made running a business on Newbury Street successful or difficult for you?

5) Could you please give me a breakdown of the gender of your clientele?

6) Where does your clientele reside?

7) What is the age range of your clientele?

Merchant Interviews San Francisco

1) How long has your establishment been in business on Union Street?

2) Why did you select to open shop on Union Street as opposed to elsewhere?

3) Has Union Street been conducive to running a successful business or does it present any particular difficulties?

4) What has made running a business on Union Street successful or difficult for you?

5) Could you give me a breakdown of the gender of your clientele?

6) Where does your clientele reside?

7) What is the age range of your clientele?

Note: The word “Fillmore Street” was substituted on the appropriate blocks.
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