

**What's in a Name?
The Role of Naming in Neighborhood Evolution**

by

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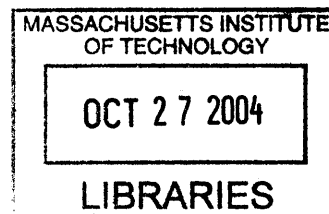
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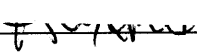
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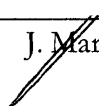


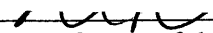
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ABSTRACT

Many cities have seen neighborhoods undergo successful revitalization in conjunction with the introduction of a new name. This thesis attempts to understand the role of neighborhood naming as a tool of planning and development, and investigates under what circumstances naming might be used to induce change in a neighborhood. The research question has been placed in the context of recent scholarship on place naming, the construction of social and political identity, the role of image in identity construction, marketing, branding, city imaging, and the tools of government. Recommendations are offered on how a neighborhood name might be used as a tool in planning and development, conditions for the successful introduction of a new neighborhood name, and circumstances that will increase the likelihood of inducing broader changes within a neighborhood via naming.

Three case studies of neighborhood naming are presented: DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) in Brooklyn; Hudson Yards, also known as Hell's Kitchen South, on the far West Side of Manhattan; and the Ladder District, in Boston's Downtown Crossing neighborhood. All three were once active parts of their respective cities but for various reasons had fallen into decline. To varying degrees of success, each has recently introduced a new name in an attempt to reinvent itself as a desirable place to live, work, and spend leisure time.

The history and experience of each neighborhood with respect to naming was investigated via primary and secondary sources of research. Qualitative interviews were conducted with stakeholders that represented key actors in each case, including community leaders, developers, local businesses, and city planning officials. Content analysis of local and regional press (newspapers and magazines) was used to both gauge awareness as well as to evaluate whether and how the neighborhood image was projected in the media. Official policy and planning documents were also evaluated including zoning actions, Environmental Impact Statements, and landmark designation materials.

Thesis Supervisor: J. Mark Schuster
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Introduction

Upon moving to New York City in 1998, I lived in a neighborhood called Murray Hill. Friends lived in neighborhoods called Turtle Bay, Hell’s Kitchen, Grammercy Park, Yorkville and Stuyvesant Town. We went out in neighborhoods called SoHo, Alphabet City, the Lower East Side, TriBeCa, and Hell’s Kitchen. The names helped us navigate the city. Within a short time, I had mastered the language of the city, the patchwork of images and identities associated with various neighborhood names. It was an evocative patchwork, one that seemed to leave no part of the city unnamed. Sometimes I knew the history of the names, but just as often the origins of the monikers remained a mystery. In the latter cases, I assumed they had been in existence for so long that the reasons for why they were so named no longer important.

After having lived only a short time in the city I began to hear about “new” neighborhood names. Neighborhoods that I had known as one name were now going by another. New names were popping up everywhere. NoLiTa, DUMBO, SoCo, Hudson Heights, Hamilton Heights, the parade of changing neighborhood names seemed relentless. Every previously anonymous corner of the city was being named. I began to wonder – why was this happening? Was this just one of the quirks of New York City, one of the small details that made it unique among cities?

I consulted several New Yorkers who claimed that this was just a “New York thing,” but it seems that this trend is not unique to New York at all. An informal survey¹ of cities around the country has revealed that the phenomenon of neighborhood re-naming is not unique to New York City or Boston, nor is it particularly new. Neighborhoods and cities are constantly in flux, and for as long as cities have grown and changed so have the boundaries, populations and within them. For decades, if not centuries, neighborhoods have undergone name changes for a multitude of reasons (and by a wide range of actors), with place names changing with the evolution of land use, ownership, political regime, and features of the landscape.

A small sampling from around the country confirmed this trend: in Chicago, a neighborhood once known as South Chicago Heights now goes by the name of Ford Heights. Also in Chicago, Maxwell Street to the north of the University of Illinois at Chicago Campus is now called University Village, and South Lawndale is now known as Little Village. In Detroit, East Detroit is now called

¹ See Appendix I for list of renamed neighborhoods.

Eastpointe, and a neighborhood once known as Cass Corridor now goes by Midtown. Hartford, Connecticut's Charter Oak-Zion neighborhood is now called Behind the Rocks, and the city's North End is now Uptown.

In the Los Angeles area, the neighborhood of Van Nuys is now known as Lake Balboa, North Hollywood is now Valley Village, Canoga Park is known as West Hills, what used to be Sepulveda is known as the North Hills, and South-Central LA has been changed to South LA.

The southern section of Florida's Miami Beach has become known as SoBe (short for South Beach). In Milwaukee, a neighborhood on the northwest side of the city has adopted the name Granville Crossing. In Nashville, a neighborhood South of the Broadway area is now named SoBro.

St. Louis' neighborhood of Dogtown has been renamed Clayton-Hanley. What was once known as West Philadelphia is today called University City, while South Philadelphia was re-named Queer Village in the 1960s. In San Francisco, the area South of Market is popularly known as SoMa; the city's Castro district was once called Eureka Valley, then briefly Castro Village, until "village" was dropped in favor of "district." Washington D.C. has seen the neighborhoods of Trinidad, Navy Yard and Lincoln Park become grouped under the name Capitol Hill, while the neighborhoods of Glover Park and Burlieth merged into what is now North Georgetown. The area east of 16th Street is now known as the East Dupont neighborhood, and North of Massachusetts Avenue has become known as NoMa.

In Boston, the neighborhood today known as Bay Village was at different times the Church Street District, South Cove and Kerry Village. Also in Boston, the area South of Washington Street in the South End is today called SoWa; the South Boston Waterfront is now known as the Seaport District, and the Longwood Medical Area has merged with part of Roxbury to create the Crosstown neighborhood. An area near South Station and the Financial District has been dubbed the Leather District, while the area near North Station and the Fleet Center is known by some as the Bulfinch Triangle and by others as Downtown North.

This phenomenon has also occurred outside the United States. For example, in the UK the Welsh city of Cardiff has seen the neighborhood name of Tyneside Quay be replaced with Adventurers Quay, while Ely Fields has turned into Marques Court. In Canada the neighborhood of Don Vale in Toronto is now known as Cabbagetown, and areas along Bloor Street today are known as Bloordale Village and Bloorcourt Village.² This trend clearly has had an international impact.

² For additional examples, please refer to Appendix I.

Back in New York, one of my friends lived in DUMBO, one of the “new” neighborhoods that had piqued my attention. DUMBO is in Brooklyn, the name an acronym for “Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass.” For most of the twenty years that she had lived there the area had remained fairly unknown and under the radar, which was ideal for her needs. She was an artist and had originally moved to DUMBO for its quiet atmosphere and the large, cheap, and empty warehouses where she could afford enough space for her studio and living space. But she had sensed change in the past few years. Her building had recently gone “condo” and she had been able to “buy-in” at a reduced rate from the going market value, which was still considerably more than it would have commanded five years earlier. Then, one day in 2001, she noticed a red, double-decker ‘Big Apple Tours’ bus driving through the neighborhood. That was the day she realized DUMBO had changed.

At the time I was a brand strategy consultant – I was spending my days thinking about marketing, branding, brand names, identities and image. I became curious about whether any of DUMBO’s growth could be related to its catchy name, and how. Or was DUMBO’s success merely thanks to the promotional efforts of realtors combined with the larger real estate boom in the city? I had endured the rite of passage in New York City of looking for an apartment: I knew that realtors had a propensity to invent names for neighborhoods just to make prospective tenants believe that the neighborhood really wasn’t that bad, in fact that it was up and coming.

But perhaps there was more to this trend than simple marketing. What exactly was at play? These are the questions that have propelled me towards this thesis. Perhaps there is much more to naming than purely a marketing strategy – perhaps naming is a tool that can be used by the government, by the private sector, and by community groups to effect change in a neighborhood. And if this is true, what is the implication for planning and development?

This thesis thus seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Why are new neighborhood names emerging?
2. Is it appropriate to consider naming as a separate tool of planning and development?
3. Under what circumstances does naming, as a tool, induce change in a neighborhood?

Throughout the United States and around the world cities have seen neighborhood names come and go. The mutability of neighborhood names is related to trends that also see constant shifts of neighborhood boundaries. Such changes are considered what occurs when “an immigrant

group moves out; another moves in. An industry dies off; its warehouses become upscale lofts.”³ The casual observer might thus suggest that naming is not a deliberate or strategic decision but rather an eventual, grass-roots and casual side-effect of human movement. But I am convinced that in many occasions, naming is something more.

There are likely many reasons a neighborhood changes its name. In some cases, the objective is to improve its reputation, in others, out of pride and acknowledgment of history. Hopes attached to naming include re-investment from businesses that may chose to locate in the district, new residents, new visitors to patronize local shops and restaurants, and attention to a neighborhood from influential people to an area that perhaps had been overlooked in the past. Giving a neighborhood a new name might force people to reconsider the place as something different than they knew. Naming could also be a mechanism to accelerate changes that might have occurred on their own, but at a slower pace.

In this thesis I will explore the notion that for many neighborhoods, naming is a deliberate attempt to not only a change an area’s image and identity, but also to create the conditions in which the neighborhood can induce transformation and revitalization.

METHODOLOGY

The primary method of investigation for this thesis consists of qualitative case studies to examine the history and experience of three neighborhoods which recently introduced new neighborhood names: DUMBO in Brooklyn, Hudson Yards in Manhattan, and the Ladder District in Boston.

The three neighborhoods are similar in that all were once active parts of their respective cities that for various reasons had fallen into decline, experienced significant disinvestment and abandonment. They were also similar in that all three were in the process of being transformed into desirable places to live, work, and spend leisure time. However, despite these commonalities it was for their differences and not their similarities that I chose the three cases.

My selection criteria were based on an in-going hypothesis that the type of actor (i.e. public sector, private sector, community) who was largely responsible for the introduction of the name would influence my findings. The DUMBO name was primarily promoted by a real estate developer who had ownership interests in a large proportion of the properties; the Ladder District name was

³ Chris Reidy, “Unbound, by Tradition,” *The Boston Globe*, 25 July 2004.

coined and promoted by several new retail tenants (or, more specifically, by public relations professionals working on their behalf); and the Hudson Yards name by the New York City Department of City Planning.

In addition to this distinction, upon further investigation it became evident that these cases had many more features that distinguished them from one another. Key differences included a) the degree to which neighborhood identity had been solidified prior to the introduction of the new name; b) how long the ‘new’ name has been used by the community; c) reason for introducing the name, and d) the degree to which the name has been accepted.

In DUMBO, a) the neighborhood was considered a “no-man’s land” prior to its naming, neither here nor there, between two neighborhoods with strong identities and boundaries (Fulton Landing and Vinegar Hill); b) while the name was coined over 30 years ago by residents, it did not gain traction among the general public for many years until other tools were brought to bear on the neighborhood; c) the name was not coined explicitly with a view to trigger reinvestment and redevelopment; and d) that the name appears to have been accepted into the vernacular of the city, having already become entrenched in the urban consciousness.

In contrast, the Ladder District a) is a small part of a larger neighborhood that pre-dates the adoption of the Ladder District name; b) has only been in existence since 2001 but is a variation of an earlier, obscure designation used primarily by planners and historians; c) was explicitly introduced to highlight new investment and spur further growth and development in the area; and d) has yet to be embraced by the wide range of constituents in the city and is currently employed by only a small segment of the population.

Finally, the Hudson Yards neighborhood is distinguished by the fact that a) much of the area is known as either Hell’s Kitchen or as Clinton, but never has the entire area been considered one distinct neighborhood; b) the name Hudson Yards has only recently been introduced and has not yet come into full use; c) the name was coined by local officials and boosters, referring to their desire to jump-start redevelopment of the area by decking over the MTA rail yards; d) is in the process of being codified in the zoning code (as a special district), but has not yet come into common usage.

Once selected, I engaged in an in-depth study of each neighborhood, focusing primarily on a three-pronged approach: I conducted qualitative interviews with stakeholders that represented key actors in each case, including community leaders, developers, local businesses, and city planning officials; I surveyed local and regional newspapers and magazines to both gauge awareness in the popular press as well as to evaluate the image that was projected in the media for each neighborhood;

and I reviewed official policy and planning documents pertaining to each neighborhood, including zoning actions, official maps and landmark designation materials for both local and federal designations.

In the next chapter, I will explore alternative theories on how naming impacts a neighborhood, and propose a series of hypotheses for why a neighborhood might undergo name change, how a neighborhood name might be used as a tool in planning and development, conditions for the successful introduction of a new neighborhood name, and how changing or introducing new neighborhood names might be effective in inducing broader changes within a neighborhood.

In Chapter II I will engage in a brief review of the literature on place naming, city marketing, branding, imaging the city, and the tools of government.

Following the literature review, I will introduce the case studies, devoting one chapter to each. At the end of each case I will present a brief analysis of the case with respect to naming.

Chapter VI will summarize the key findings from the case studies, and will also provide a review of some of the initial hypotheses discussed in Chapter II as well as a review of the literature in view of the case study findings. Chapter VII will propose recommendations for naming a neighborhood, conditions for success as well as areas for further research.

NOMENCLATURE

A brief note on nomenclature: I will not make a distinction between “naming” and “re-naming” for this thesis. While there are likely to be different implications for places that are replacing an old name and those that are being named for the first time, I have chosen to not differentiate between the two situations for the sake of simplicity. I have also chosen to consider the designation “district” to be the same as a “neighborhood,” even though the two are often considered different concepts.

In this thesis, I will assume that a new name has been successful in ‘sticking’ when it is used consistently in both “official” and unofficial(vernacular) realms. Consistent use in the press, absence of mentions of any alternative names, and use by ordinary citizens, residents of the neighborhood, commercial interests, realtors, visitors, a whole diversity of people, is an indication that it has entered into the vernacular.

I will consider a neighborhood name that is “official” to be one that appears consistently in municipal documents, city agency maps, zoning ordinances and strategic plans – this is a name that has been “codified.” This approach to defining “official” naming reflects the practice in New York

Introduction

City where “the growth of mechanisms of municipal order [saw] the informal adoption of place names give way to the official or ceremonial.”⁴

⁴ Sanna Feirstein, *Naming New York: Manhattan Places & How They Got Their Names* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 10.

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I. Neighborhood Naming: Initial Thoughts

As I have already discussed in the introduction, the impetus to study this topic came from my experiences living in New York City from 1998-2002. During that time, Michael Bloomberg was elected mayor by campaigning on a platform of a more business-minded approach to municipal governance. This is but one example of how municipal governments are increasingly borrowing strategies from the business world to manage their cities.

In their treatise on the rise of the “experience economy”, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore discuss how companies must create experiences to entice consumers and distinguish products and services that have in all other ways become ubiquitous and interchangeable.¹ How is this related to neighborhoods and naming? Postmodern urban theory has suggested that cities are facing the same challenge of commoditization, where chain stores and developers replicate their ‘successes’ in neighborhoods across the country and around the world.² With this increasing homogenization of place, cities have found themselves unable to attract (or preserve) the allegiance of residents and businesses, because they are just like anyplace else.

Cities are thus turning strategic marketing to promote specific assets and neighborhoods to both the outside world and to their own residents. At an even smaller scale, neighborhoods within these cities appear to be engaging in similar strategies, often surpassing efforts made by the municipality or the local economic development organization. Neighborhood groups and business associations are engaging in activities to promote their communities to attract residents, to bring shoppers back to their main streets, and to entice businesses to bring their employees to fill local office buildings.

At the same time, cities and neighborhoods have recognized that they cannot always exert control over many of the factors that might contribute to location decisions, such as the cost of

¹ Joseph B. Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business A Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

² See, for example:

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Smith, Neil. “New City, New Frontier: The Lower East Side as Wild, Wild West.” In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin. New York: The Noonday Press, 1992.

living or doing business. Some have thus turned to address more intangible and experiential features to distinguish themselves. Marketing and branding their “places” is one strategy for those places looking to build an identity and a brand to combat this sense of placelessness suggested by Postmodern Theory. Neighborhoods are in many ways taking a cue from developers of master-planned communities and BIDs – places where private industry has already begun to understand the power of marketing.

If one of the fundamental elements of branding is creating an identity for your product and a name that will evoke this identity, then for an area that is competing for residents, businesses and public investment, naming and branding can be seen as a powerful strategy for creating an identity and a ‘place’ that is definable and tangible to attract the attention of the bored masses. Like a memorable catch-phrase or slogan, a name and a brand allows a community to put a more complete identity forward, to provide a rallying point for its residents and too project a collective vision for the neighborhood.

These initial thoughts have led me to generate a series of hypotheses relating to the larger themes of neighborhood naming, including

- the role of naming in building local identity
- the role of naming in building image
- naming as a marketing tool
- naming as a symbol of power
- naming as a demonstration of political legitimacy and power
- naming as a way to jump-start revitalization
- naming as a way to harness resources
- naming as a way to protect and preserve a neighborhood
- what makes a name “stick”³

In the sections that follow I will examine these themes and hypotheses in more depth.

NAMING AS MARKETING TOOL

In many cases the emergence of a new neighborhood name is assumed to be the work of entrepreneurial real estate developers and businesses seeking to create value for their ventures or to

³ “Stickiness means that a message makes an impact. You can't get it out of your head. It sticks in your memory.” Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2000), 25.

attract people to their developments. In such situations a new name is seen as a way to “spice up their attraction”⁴ and to “create excitement and give a location a fresh start.”⁵

- Neighborhood naming is only about branding and marketing, an attempt to create a “destination” that can attract visitors, tenants, residents.
- Neighborhood naming is a superficial tactic that has little impact on the neighborhood itself.

Once named (or re-named), a neighborhood can be marketed by realtors as “the new thing,” a valuable advantage in markets where tenants, residents, businesses and consumers thrive on finding the newest, hippest, coolest place, neighborhood, or anything, for that matter. This strategy, however, suffers from “cool’s quicksilver nature”—the paradox being that “as soon as anything is cool, its cool starts to vaporize.”⁶ The impermanence of buzz, of cool, of popularity, is not easily or frequently sustained – and its sustainability is made all the more difficult to achieve when that image is not authenticated by supporting “evidence” of a new neighborhood. Naming alone cannot create a destination attractive to potential visitors, tenants, residents. Is there a role for naming if there is no “there” there? If, other than the name, there is no investment or change?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), neighborhood associations and local business associations are a driving force in the revitalization and marketing of downtown commercial corridors and have become active in the ‘renaming’ game in many cities. Their role is largely promotional and focused on marketing activities to draw visitors, business and tourists to their neighborhoods. For all such entities, their name is a vital element of the ‘brand’ that is promoted, featured on brochures, in advertisements, on street furniture and adornments, etc. In some cases the name that the BID or neighborhood association uses was an existing neighborhood name, but in many others, it is a new conception reflecting the distinct boundaries established by the neighborhood association. In some cases, such names become the de facto moniker for that part of town, in essence, re-naming the neighborhood: University City in Philadelphia and Bloordale Village in Toronto are some examples of this.

To that end, these organizations will often spend a large fraction of their budget and time on marketing activities that promote the neighborhood (and thus its name). In a 2001 survey of American BIDs, Jerry Mitchell found that over 75% reported being “very involved” in consumer

⁴ Beth Daley, “Lost Hamlets,” *The Boston Globe*, 18 January 2004.

⁵ Chris Reidy, “Unbound, by Tradition,” *The Boston Globe*, 25 July 2004.

⁶ Lewis MacAdams, *Birth of the Cool* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 19.

marketing, with over 40% considering marketing to be their primary job. In an indication of the importance accorded to marketing, Toronto's West Bloor Village Business Improvement Area⁷ dedicates \$124,000 of their annual budget of \$279,000 to advertising and promotion.⁸

NAMING AND IMAGE

- Changing a neighborhood name provides an opportunity to 'reinvent' the neighborhood.
- Changing a neighborhood name is an attempt to change the image and perceptions associated with that neighborhood.

A name automatically conjures up images and associations that might reflect positively or negatively on a neighborhood. It would follow, then, that introducing a new name might suggest a desire to change the image of the neighborhood. Neighborhoods will often introduce names that evoke the image of famous and desirable communities from an entirely different city in the hope of creating value and cachet for their own neighborhood. For example, the proliferation of neighborhood names which are acronyms is largely attributed to wanting to evoke the image of SoHo (South of Houston) and TriBeCa (Triangle Below Canal Street) in New York. Named in the 1960s and 1970s, those two neighborhood names have come to evoke the revitalization and reinvention of previously downtrodden, derelict areas into the epicenters of the style and art worlds, resplendent with cafés, galleries, restaurants, clubs, artist lofts and "hipster" residents.⁹

Many neighborhoods around the country have since adopted this device, in the hope that the acronym will suggest a similarly desirable environment and community. LoDo (Denver), SoMa (San Francisco), SoBro (Nashville), SoWa (Boston), NoVa (Virginia), NoHo (LA), SoBe (Miami), and SoNo (Norwalk, CT) are all examples of this trend. Other neighborhoods in New York City have also proposed acronym-names – witness NoHo, NoCa, NoMad, NoLiTa, BoCoCa, LoSo and DUMBO. This tactic is similar to the efforts at changing neighborhood image mentioned above, wherein less desirable neighborhoods reference a nearby, more desirable neighborhood in their name to benefit from the positive image of the desirable neighborhood.

⁷ In Toronto, BIDs are officially called Business Improvement Areas but in all other ways are identical to a BID.

⁸ Lorlene Hoyt, "Lecture 2: The Origins of the BIDS Movement," *Lecture for Course 11.422 Business Improvement Districts* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Spring Semester, 2003), 6.

⁹ Ironically, SoHo in New York refers to the neighborhood in London of the same name, but the London Soho is not an acronym. It was named after a hunting cry, dating back to the time when Soho was a small village on the outskirts of a London surrounded by fields.

Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia Entry, "SoHo," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soho> (accessed August 2, 2004).

I. Neighborhood Naming: Initial Thoughts

Some neighborhoods have changed their names to emphasize similarities or proximity to more desirable neighborhoods, in the hope that the image projected by the idealized neighborhoods would ‘rub off’ on their own neighborhood. For example, Eastpointe, MI was formerly East Detroit but changed their name to create associations with the wealthy Grosse Pointe neighborhood.

Communities have also sought to change their names in order to dissociate themselves from the stigma of the past, from negative associations or from negative uses. This tactic has been seen in areas that were once notoriously crime-laden such as South Central LA/South LA or West Philadelphia/University City. Such practices are not new as we have seen entire towns employ similar strategies, including the Town (formerly a village) of Sing Sing, New York. Sing Sing changed its name to Ossining in 1901 in order to disassociate itself from the prison of the same name and to “distinguish goods manufactured in the village (such as shoes and stoves) from those made by convicts at Sing Sing Prison.”¹⁰

Even in the case of neighborhoods that have not suffered from negative imagery or associations, there is no doubt that naming can help set the stage for further development by suggesting associations that evoke the vision for the neighborhood. In a chaotic city where little is controllable, naming is one of the few ways to begin to change the image of a neighborhood and to actively attempt to change perceptions of the neighborhood. In this sense, naming provides an opportunity to ‘reinvent’ the neighborhood, to signal to the outside world that the neighborhood is ready for change or that key changes have already occurred (for example, underlying zoning might have changed). Is it then much of a stretch of the imagination to consider that a new neighborhood name could provide the catalyst or point of inducement for reinvestment?

NAMING AND BUILDING LOCAL IDENTITY

The layered identities of a city are broken down along many lines, neighborhoods being one of the primary ones. The concept of an entire city corresponding to a single identity is no longer the norm – global cities are diverse and complex, encompassing many sub-groups and environments which make it virtually impossible to convey a single city-wide identity. Instead, we see the emergence of increasingly finer distinctions between different parts of the city.

¹⁰ Jug Tavern of Sparta Homepage, “A Short History of Sparta and the Jug Tavern,” (Sparta, New York: Jug Tavern of Sparta, 2004), <http://www.jugtavern.org/history.htm> (accessed August 2, 2004).

I. Neighborhood Naming: Initial Thoughts

- A new name can help distinguish or carve out the “sub”-neighborhood from a larger area when the proposed “sub-neighborhood” has a different identity than the larger neighborhood.
- A new name can help create a collective identity and a sense of community when residents and businesses move into a previously unknown part of the city.

In her history of place names in Manhattan, Sanna Feirstein explains that many “new” neighborhood names have emerged simply because these areas had never been considered a neighborhood (i.e. residential) by many groups. For example, NoCa in Manhattan was a “...distinct area that didn’t really belong to any of those on the periphery”¹¹ until the 1990s.

In Boston,

..informally-named hamlets have long existed in the suburbs as new residents tried to distinguish one similar-looking landscape from another. In the city, it was the sameness of the streets that may have sparked the movement. Some Boston neighborhoods, such as Dorchester, are enormous, and as a result, residents created neighborhoods within it...These names give newer residents a sense of belonging. There is a history to their neighborhood...slowly, some of these tiny forgotten neighborhoods are re-emerging and sparking pride and a sense of responsibility in residents.¹²

Perhaps residents and communities are constantly seeking to name their neighborhoods in an attempt to create a distinct identity to which they can relate. This segmentation of the city is only natural, and reflects a desire to carve out a more comprehensible piece of such a complex entity as a large city. Considering that “people connect much more to their part than the whole [city],”¹³ naming could distinguish and separate the neighborhood from adjacent neighborhoods, or from a larger section of the city – perhaps even an existing neighborhood.

NAMING, LEGITIMACY, AND POWER

Naming has long been a powerful demonstration of control over a seemingly immutable thing, the name and identity of a place. Many places have undergone changes in nomenclature as symbolic gestures to commemorate those who are in power. Naming is used by governments to indicate a significant change in political regime, leadership and national identity. On a national scale, entire nations have undergone re-naming, including formerly communist states such as Russia (USSR), the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia), and the states of Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, etc. (Yugoslavia.

¹¹ Sanna Feirstein, *Naming New York: Manhattan Places & How They Got Their Names* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 80.

¹² Beth Daley, “Lost Hamlets,” *The Boston Globe*, 18 January 2004.

¹³ Beth Daley, “Lost Hamlets,” *The Boston Globe*, 18 January 2004

Beyond national identities, many former colonial and communist nations have changed place names for cities, provinces and even streets – fairly contemporary examples of this can be found in India (Bombay/Mumbai), China (Canton/Guangzhou), and Russia (St. Petersburg/Leningrad), where such changes were part of the symbolic re-casting of local as well as national identities.¹⁴

On a more local level, I wonder if changing a neighborhood name can be an equally symbolic and powerful device. This leads to another series of hypotheses:

- Naming allows a group of newcomers to a neighborhood to claim that area as their own.
- Naming can give a community political legitimacy by facilitating the establishment of legitimizing bodies such as community organizations.
- Naming can exclude groups from being able to identify themselves with a neighborhood.
- Naming a neighborhood demoralizes existing tenants by denying the legitimacy of their presence or contribution to the identity of the area.
- Changing a neighborhood name allows incoming residents to deny the existence of current or prior residents.
- Changing a neighborhood name is an act of aggression against the existing community.

If one of the more powerful aspects of naming is its ability to legitimize and reinforce the power of the ruling party, then one would expect naming to be used to “de-legitimize” those who might oppose or present challenges to the leadership. In this sense, naming acts as a tool to exclude groups who might have claims on a neighborhood, by establishing the identity of the neighborhood as one that does not reflect those opposing constituents. When several names are vying for primacy in a neighborhood, the name that becomes entrenched (and the constituents represented by that name) has effectively “won” the battle for power in the neighborhood.

Promoting a new name can undermine a community’s sense of belonging by suggesting some other group related to the new name belongs there. In this sense, naming can be used to exclude groups, by selecting a name that does not reflect or have any relation to the “old” residents. As such, re-naming a neighborhood might be interpreted as an act of possession, if not aggression – it clearly indicates that somebody has staked a claim and feels that they ‘own’ the neighborhood. Naming can

¹⁴ Pavel Ilyin, “Renaming of Soviet Cities After Exceptional People: A Historical Perspective on Toponymy,” *Post-Soviet Geography* 34, no.10 (December 1993): 631.

John Murray, *Politics and Place-Names: Changing Names in the Late Soviet Period* (Birmingham: Department of Russian, University of Birmingham, 2000).

Mira Kamdar, “Bombay/Mumbai: The Postmodern City,” *World Policy Journal* 14 no.2 (Summer 1997).

Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

also be used to stake a future vision for a neighborhood, while simultaneously discrediting competing visions.

In fact, introducing a new name to an area where there is an existing population, neighborhood, and community can be seen as a deliberate attempt to demoralize existing residents by suggesting that there is nothing there worth saving. Naming thus becomes a mechanism by which a statement can be made about a group's legitimacy and existence. If the old name was tied to history or had any significance to the residents, changing the name is a none-too-subtle way of eradicating community roots, a collective history and the identity that those elements might have informed.

On a more proactive note, naming a neighborhood can empower residents by helping to draw attention to an area and by indicating that it is no longer an anonymous "no-man's land," but rather a cohesive community of stakeholders who have vested interests and who vote. A neighborhood name provides an umbrella under which these stakeholders can represent themselves and their interests to the politicians and decision-makers, a compelling and significant factor in a system where attention is given to those who have the strongest voice. Naming thus allows a neighborhood to begin to establish political legitimacy and weight.

NAMING AND PROTECTION

- Naming is a mechanism for a neighborhood to protect itself from change and to preserve an old identity.
- Naming a compromise that is a way to memorialize a neighborhood's past while physical changes occur.
- Naming is away to capitalize on the history and identity of a neighborhood, even while changes are occurring that eliminate all other traces of that identity.
- Naming is a limiting factor in the reinvention and growth of a neighborhood. Codifying a neighborhood name restricts its potential in the future to evolve, grow, and redefine itself as needed. Naming is thus resisted by planners (or other actors) in those situations in which they wish to maintain flexibility and the ability to change.

Naming can be used to imply that a neighborhood has a past: this implication has its source in the tradition of naming places after historical figures or events – i.e. if a place is named, it must have a past. In situations where change has already occurred, naming might be employed to honor the past as a nod to the history of the place even though none of its history might be reflected in the current physical environment. Developments that have replaced entire industrial complexes will often resurrect or invent names that recall what once occupied the land but no longer exists.

A neighborhood name might also evoke identity based on the physical characteristics of a neighborhood, such as the buildings, streets, and boundaries of the neighborhood.¹⁵ By naming a place that was previously unnamed (and theoretically a blank slate), the physical elements of that area become associated with the name and are thus considered intrinsic aspects of the neighborhood. Any attempt to change these physical aspects might be seen as a threat to the neighborhood, prompting protective moves to prevent any changes to the “identity” of neighborhood.

In the context of these developments where the name is all that is left of a historic use or structure, or where awareness is raised regarding the “significance” of the physical elements of a neighborhood, a heightened concern and desire for historic preservation and protection often emerges. Fear of eliminating traces of past communities and identities has led to an increase in protective actions, including movements to designate neighborhoods Historic Districts on the National Register of Historic Places.

Designation implies regulations that dictate allowed uses, styles of construction and urban design, and place limitations on demolition or redevelopment of parcels and buildings within set boundaries. Neighborhood names are used to designate the neighborhood, and thus acquire a symbolic and protective role. A name thus acquires a patina of being “official,” a concept that is explored later in this chapter.

While the development restrictions are looked upon favorably by many neighborhood and preservation activists, they are seen as prohibitive and counter-productive for other stakeholders (planners, developers, even residents) who would like to maintain flexibility to allow the neighborhood to evolve and grow. Resisting the urge to name a neighborhood could thus leave the door open to any number of identities, uses, residents and developments in the future.

NAMING AND HARNESSING RESOURCES

- Naming a neighborhood gives a community the visibility and legitimacy to demand (and get) city services (and other types of resources).
- An area seeking investment and other government “intervention” uses naming to delineate within which such interventions are intended to occur.

Borrowing a page from the experience of cities marketing themselves on the global scale, neighborhoods are finding they need to compete for resources as well as for their “fair share” of

¹⁵ Lee Cuba and David M. Hummon, “A Place to Call Home: Identification With Dwelling, Community, and Region,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 34, no.1. (1993): 113.

residents, businesses, and tourists.¹⁶ If naming allows a neighborhood to gain political legitimacy (as discussed above), it also provides the neighborhood with the power and collective voice to draw attention to itself. Such visibility might allow the neighborhood to effectively compete with other neighborhoods for municipal and other resources. This ability to harness resources is appealing not only to residents and community members, but is equally attractive to planners, developers, and other stakeholders. As such, the effort to name or promote a name might just as well come from private interests or from the city government.

NAMING AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

- A new name indicates what the agenda/vision is for the future of an area.
- Changing neighborhood names can induce or catalyze development. Naming thus 'leads' what might be happening in the private market.
- Neighborhoods use naming to attract attention to the fact that they have changed. Naming thus reflects what has happened in the private market. Neighborhood naming can reinforce the physical and political changes that may have already occurred, or point to changes that might be underway.
- Changing a neighborhood name can encourage people to consider new uses in that neighborhood, especially those that might be incompatible with existing conditions.
- Neighborhoods use naming to attract attention to the fact that they have changed. Naming thus reflects what has happened already in the private market. Neighborhood naming can reinforce the physical and political changes that may have already occurred, or point to changes that might be underway
- Naming can be an effective short-term tool for revitalization.
- Naming works as a catalyst for revitalization only as a long-term strategy.
- Naming a neighborhood alone will not be a sufficient catalyst for change – the neighborhood requires additional actions to induce redevelopment and investment.

Neighborhood transformation is gradual, a long-term endeavor that is the outcome of many smaller, often seemingly unrelated initiatives. Over such a long time horizon, most people do not notice the cumulative effects of many small initiatives. The hypothesis here is that to be successful and effective, naming a neighborhood should be considered a long-term strategy, that a new name

¹⁶ Philip Kotler, Donald H. Haider, and Irving Rein, *Marketing Places : Attracting Investment, Industry, And Tourism To Cities, States, And Nations*, (New York : Free Press, 1993).

Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990).

should thus be expected to last for an indeterminate number of years, perhaps for several generations.

An alternative hypothesis suggests that naming is an effective short-term strategy and thus it becomes less important whether or not the name becomes entrenched or adopted as an “official” name. Perhaps a name that generates enough interest over the short term to attract a critical mass of investment is all that is necessary.

Historians of urban names in New York have noted that “new place names have often resulted from the reconfiguration of space or neighborhood in conjunction with the razing of old structures to make way for the new.”¹⁷ Introducing and promoting a new neighborhood name could help the public recognize such “reconfigurations of space” or other changes they may have already witnessed but had not registered as full-scale neighborhood redevelopment. Naming becomes a way to advertise that the changes are not piece-meal, but are part of a larger initiative or trend towards whole-scale revitalization and reinvestment. For municipalities that are constantly under pressure to demonstrate to their residents and local businesses “where their tax dollars are going” naming can be a way to ‘honor’ or advertise major public actions and public investment. Furthermore, by naming a neighborhood to highlight the investment made by the public sector, additional attention is given to the public investment, theoretically raising awareness and interest of the private market to continue investing in the neighborhood. This is especially important in cases when public investment is made with the expectation that it will induce additional private investment and development.

WHAT MAKES A NAME STICK?

While the focus of this thesis is not to establish whether or how a name has been successfully adopted, I do hope that I will be able to point to several conditions that make it more likely for a name to take hold in a community.

- Making a name “official” makes it stick.
- The existence of discrete boundaries helps a name to “stick.”
- A name must be used by several different groups of stakeholders in the neighborhood.
- Renaming a neighborhood has the greatest chances of successfully sticking if there are actual changes on the ground that reflect the change in identity.
- A name with a connection to what is present in the neighborhood or what used to be in the neighborhood has a greater likelihood of adoption.

¹⁷ Sanna Feirstein, *Naming New York: Manhattan Places & How They Got Their Names* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 18.

Is there a relationship between codification of a name and its likelihood of “sticking”? Is a sticky neighborhood name one that has been made “official”? Listing the neighborhood by a given name on the national and local preservation registers certainly adds to the aura of “official-ness.” While though making a name “official” via landmarking or zoning actions does not always compel private citizens to use the name, it is an indication that at least one influential constituency has adopted the name and that there is a high likelihood that they will influence others to use the same name.

Cities vary in their approach and policy on “officially” naming neighborhoods. Some have passed legislation to allow for the official codification of a neighborhood name. Los Angeles, for example, recently passed legislation on official neighborhood re-naming procedures.¹⁸ Others, like New York City and Boston, prefer to leave neighborhood naming unofficial despite the existence of “official” mechanisms for determining other types of place names (such as squares, intersections, and streets). This philosophy stems from a desire to maintain a flexible condition that allows for the constant change and growth of the city. It is a return to the early tradition of naming places in New York City, where names for streets and squares places “were informally bestowed and gained currency through use.”¹⁹

An aversion to codification might further be out of a concern that formalizing such a process runs the risk of placing too much emphasis on the issue of naming rather than on more substantive issues facing the neighborhood. Furthermore, there is a risk that the more that the city delineates neighborhoods and boundaries, the more likely the city will become “balkanized,” creating a situation in which neighborhoods turn inwards rather than identifying with the larger city. This runs counter to the natural tendency of having many overlapping identities and neighborhoods which contribute to the unique complexity that is the big city.²⁰

New York City does create “special zoning districts” which are often named after the neighborhoods in which they are established. In the event that an already existing neighborhood name happens to correlate to a section of the city which is being re-zoned, planning authorities will often label that Special District with the commonly used neighborhood name. Such an action

¹⁸ Ronald F. Deaton, “City Policy on the Re-Naming of a Community,” *Report of the Chief Legislative Analyst to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee*. (Los Angeles: The City of Los Angeles, Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst, 14 March 2003).

¹⁹ Sanna Feirstein, *Naming New York: Manhattan Places & How They Got Their Names* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 10.

²⁰ Vishaan Chakrabarti, Telephone Interview, 7 June 2004.

effectively “codifies” the name in the zoning, but it is not intended or designed to finalize the neighborhood’s name.

Meanwhile in Boston the Boston Redevelopment Authority avoids mapping boundaries and assigning neighborhood names because of the political implications of such actions. Maps are “often meant to be only a zoning tool” because neighborhood boundaries are recognized to be fluid and indeterminate, and “because a neighborhood is a mental construct... [and]... everyone has a different idea of boundaries.”²¹

This point is reinforced by the multiplicity of maps available from multiple city agencies and organizations. The Bostonian Society, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Boston Landmarks Commission, the Boston Transportation Department and the Boston Society of Architects all have their own maps that identify Boston neighborhoods and their boundaries. All are equally right, contends the Transportation Department, because “neighborhoods don't have legal boundaries.”²²

The importance of codification is thus questionable, given that there are many examples of popularly used and acknowledged neighborhood names that are not on the official record.

What other factors might help create a context in which a new neighborhood name is adopted and incorporated into the vernacular? It seems logical that a successful name should be used consistently by multiple constituent groups: the press, public officials, the police, realtors, residents, and businesses. My in-going assumption is that when a name is consistently used by those groups, it has been accepted and incorporated into daily use – in a word, it has “stuck.” Finally, it would seem intuitive to consider that a neighborhood name rooted in history or based on what actually exists in the area would be much more likely to take hold among a multiplicity of constituents – in such cases, it is much more difficult to dispute the authenticity of a suggested name.

SUMMARY

Neighborhood naming might be the harbinger of change, a reaction to change, or an attempt to control inevitable change. In cities such as Boston, “informal neighborhoods were defined by the names of nearby industries, residents’ ethnic makeup, or some strange observation that simply stuck a name to a place.”²³ Today, neighborhoods are likely just as often named by coincidence, but many

²¹ Chris Reidy, “Unbound, by Tradition,” *The Boston Globe*, 25 July 2004.

²² Chris Reidy, “Unbound, by Tradition,” *The Boston Globe*, 25 July 2004.

²³ Beth Daley, “Lost Hamlets,” *The Boston Globe*, 18 January 2004.

I. Neighborhood Naming: Initial Thoughts

other reasons and implications often lead developers, municipalities, politicians, residents, and businessmen to use naming in an attempt to gain control over one small aspect of a constantly changing city.

II. Theoretical Background

I have placed the topic of neighborhood naming the intersection of several areas of inquiry in the academic literature. First I will introduce several concepts from the study of place naming, or choronomastics, a designation that refers to the science of space names.¹ I will follow that with a brief review of the construction of political and social identity. A discussion of imaging the city will follow, building on some of the concepts of the construction of identity. Next I will briefly review the literature tied to the marketing and branding of cities, ending with a discussion of the theories related to the successful introduction of names. Finally I will finish with a brief examination of the “tools of government” literature, to allow us a consideration of neighborhood naming as a mechanism (rather than a casual, meaningless trend or phenomenon).

When dealing with ‘place’, much of the scholarship in these categories is focused on naming of cities, regions and countries, as opposed to the smaller, more local scale of the neighborhood. I have made the assumption that many of the conclusions can be made applicable to the case of neighborhoods, however, this also points to an opportunity for additional research on the subject.

CHORONOMASTICS (PLACE NAMING)

Related to Onomastics, the study of naming, “Choronomastics is the science of space names, from the Greek ‘Choros,’ meaning area, and ‘onomastikos,’ relating to the name. This includes the study of place names (toponyms), names of waterways or water surfaces (hydronyms), communication lanes (odonyms)....”² More specifically, “Choronymy devotes itself to the study of the relationship between a place and the manner in which people traditionally refer to it.”³

In her choronomastic study of Manhattan street names Anne Raulin seeks to determine “the symbolic characterization of [the] city via analysis of the ‘literal’ and total marking of its space.”⁴ Her

¹ Anne Raulin, “The Naming of Urban Space: A Study of Manhattan Place Names,” Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research, 1984, 2.

² Raymond Ledrut, *Les images de la ville*, (Paris: Antropos, 1973), 86.

³ Henri Dorion and Louis-Edmond Hamelin, “De la toponymie traditionnelle à une choronymie totale.” *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec* 20 (September 1966): 203.

⁴ Anne Raulin, “The Naming of Urban Space: A Study of Manhattan Place Names,” Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research, 1984, 10.

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research emphasizes the ability of urban space and urban place names to convey messages, and suggests that naming is “an act of identification...it enables nature to emerge from the state of indifferentiation in which it is originally plunged.”⁵ In this sense we could expect a neighborhood to seek to use naming to differentiate itself from its surroundings and broadcast its identity to the outside world.

In a 1967 study of Chicago neighborhood names, Albert Hunter found that the Community Area names introduced in the 1920’s “were one of several symbols that residents employed when constructing their identity and sense of place locally, as well as in the wider city.”⁶ The idea of the sense of place is revisited in later areas of research, including image and identity. In this context, I would emphasize the importance of naming as a tool for orientation – a name helps to locate oneself within the context of the larger city. At the same time, Hunter’s comment highlights the multiplicity of roles that naming can play – it can both help situate an individual (i.e. the sense of place), while at the same time contribute to the construction of identity. This discussed in more depth in the section that follows. This interpretation is echoed by Hans Mommaas, who suggests that a neighborhood name has the potential to “meet the need for sources of urban orientation and identification in the mist of a far-reaching uncoupling of space, social geography and culture.”⁷

IDENTITY: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL

The role of place names and their influence on political identity is has been studied extensively. Much research has been devoted to the examination of the implications of naming and names within the context of political regime change, and points to the potential of naming at any scale (city, region, and neighborhood) as a political tool. There are typically two contexts in which such a strategy is used. The first is in the context of an internal change of power, such as the case of the former Soviet Union, where places were renamed for leaders of the Communist Revolution.⁸ The second is

⁵ Anne Raulin, “The Naming of Urban Space: A Study of Manhattan Place Names,” Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research, 1984, 18.

⁶ Albert Hunter, “Symbolic Communities: A Study of Chicago’s Local Communities” *Working Paper no. 174* (University of Chicago, 1967), Center for Social Organizational Studies, Morris Janowitz Papers, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

⁷ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 44.

⁸ See, for example:

Pavel Ilyin, “Renaming of Soviet Cities After Exceptional People: A Historical Perspective on Toponymy,” *Post-Soviet Geography* 34, no.10 (December 1993): 631.

in the context of colonization, where place names are changed by a colonizing power, and usually changed back once the nation re-gains independence.

Thomas Blom Hansen introduces the case of Bombay/Mumbai, where the change back to Mumbai was not immediate and still remains a point of conflict among the population. The city has only recently renamed itself in order to reclaim its identity in the face of political change. In this case, the “renaming of Mumbai appeared as a much needed mark of distinction vis-à-vis a colonial past as well as a globalizing present,” but at the same time, not all segments of society sought to eliminate that distinction. Many preferred the implications that the name Bombay carried, that of

a unique experience of colonial and postcolonial modernity—dynamic, intensely commercial, heterogeneous, chaotic, and yet spontaneously tolerant and open-minded. This was the Bombay of ethnic and religious mixing, of opportunities, of rags-to-riches success stories, of class solidarity, of artistic modernism and hybridized energies that so many writers have celebrated in novels and poetry.⁹

Also using the example of Bombay / Mumbai, Mira Kamdar illustrates how the two names carry very different political implications for the future of the city (rather than the past): “Bombay” implies a continued cosmopolitan and global outlook, supported by the national government of India, whereas “Mumbai” evokes the inward-looking, provincial policies of the nationalist, state-level Shiv Sena party, the party elected to the leadership of the state of Maharashtra (Bombay’s home state). In renaming the city Mumbai, the leadership de-legitimizes the claims of the city to “world city” status, while demonstrating the power of naming to make a statement about place identity.¹⁰

As an additional point related to the conflicting views on the renaming of Bombay, Hansen recalls the fragility and complexity of names, suggesting that even though proper names create and fix rather than simply describe places, “no identity, no sense of community, and no imputed property of a place ever can be self-evident or stable. There are always multiple meanings, many narratives, and inherent instabilities within such entities.”¹¹ This gets to the root of the challenge of naming – how to ensure that one word and one name captures the identity of the many.

John Murray, *Politics and Place-Names: Changing Names in the Late Soviet Period*, (Birmingham: Department of Russian, University of Birmingham, 2000).

⁹ Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

¹⁰ Mira Kamdar, “Bombay/Mumbai: The Postmodern City,” *World Policy Journal* 14 no.2 (Summer 1997). 75.

¹¹ Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 2.

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This is an important link between naming and political identity, wherein place names can be thought of as mechanisms by which individuals can broadcast their own individual identity.

The fields of environmental psychology and sociology have explored the tendency to define oneself with respect to the identity of his environment and community. Cuba and Hummon cite multiple studies¹² that demonstrate how neighborhoods “continue to provide a significant locus of sentiment and meaning for the self.”¹³ They define place identity as:

...an interpretation of self that uses environmental meaning to symbolize or situate identity. Like other forms of identity, place identity answers the question – who am I? – by countering – where am I? or where do I belong?...Like people, things, and activities, places are an integral part of the social world of everyday life; as such, they become important mechanisms through which identity is defined and situated.¹⁴

Hans Mommaas reinforces these findings, pointing out that “people [want to] live in a specific residential environment with its own image and story, which at the same times says something about

¹² Cuba and Hummon reference several following articles in their review of this subject. See, for example:

James Duncan, “Landscape Taste as a Symbol of Group Identity,” *Geographical Review* 63 (1973):334-355;

Roberta Feldman, “Settlement-Identity: Psychological Bonds with Home Places in a Mobile Society,” *Environment and Behavior* 22 (1990):183-229;

Kathleen C. Gerson, Ann Stueve, and Claude Fischer, “Attachment to Place,” in *Networks and Places*, ed. Claude Fischer et al. (New York: The Free Press, 1977): 139-161.

David M. Hummon, *Commonplaces: Community Ideology and Identity in American Culture*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990);

John Kasarda and Morris Janowitz, “Community Attachment in Mass Society,” *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974): 28-39;

Leanne Rivlin, “The Neighborhood, Personal Identity, and Group Affiliations,” in *Neighborhood and Community Environments*, eds. I. Altman and A. Wandersman, (New York: Plenum Press, 1987).

¹³ Lee Cuba and David M. Hummon, “A Place to Call Home: Identification With Dwelling, Community, and Region,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 34, no.1. (1993): 111.

Other elements that contribute to the identification of an individual with a place include local social involvement and long-term residence in a neighborhood, as well as traditions of local boosting, city heroes, public landmarks, and local myths.

Lee Cuba and David M. Hummon, “A Place to Call Home: Identification With Dwelling, Community, and Region,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 34, no.1. (1993): 114.

¹⁴ Lee Cuba and David M. Hummon, “A Place to Call Home: Identification With Dwelling, Community, and Region,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 34, no.1. (1993): 112.

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who they are.”¹⁵ Furthermore, simply establishing one’s own identity by associating with a place, “places [and thus place names] function to communicate social identity.”¹⁶

David Harvey’s claims that the creation of local identities and the construction of a “sense of place” is a reaction to the compression of time and space in contemporary society.¹⁷ This theme is picked up by Berci Florian in his succinct summary of one of the challenges facing modern global cities. He points out that the desire to create a global marketplace that facilitates cross-cultural exchanges has resulted also in the uniform development of urban centers, where differences in culture, shape, tastes are whitewashed. This condition has resulted in a paradox – on the one hand, this global “monoculture” results in a demand for individuality, amplified and fueled by the trend towards mass-customization and the ability of firms to fine-tune their offerings to individual desires and needs.¹⁸ At the same time, Florian suggests that “cities are in danger of losing their power to differentiate themselves and to elicit emotions, bonds and involvement. They are becoming impersonal, anonymous and, in the end, uninhabitable.”¹⁹

To escape this paradox, Florian thus suggests that “...anyone who wants to remain visible in the Global Village will need to offer a unique proposition.”²⁰ Neighborhood naming thus begins to create a distinguishing feature and evokes a distinct identity to which residents can attach themselves – the “unique proposition” emphasized by Florian. The name itself can be a unique proposition – a name such as DUMBO, while dismissed by some as silly or juvenile, also succeeds in eliciting emotion, occasionally for the same reason.

While these are compelling arguments for the city to seek out and promote a unique and differentiating identity, Hedly Smyth warns against establishing an identity that does not reflect the interests of the existing population and stakeholders, suggesting that in such cases, “the creation of

¹⁵ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 36.

¹⁶ Lee Cuba and David M. Hummon, “A Place to Call Home: Identification With Dwelling, Community, and Region,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 34, no.1. (1993): 111.

¹⁷ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 271.

¹⁸ Berci Florian, “The City as a Brand: Orchestrating a Unique Experience,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 20.

¹⁹ Berci Florian, “The City as a Brand: Orchestrating a Unique Experience,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 20.

²⁰ Berci Florian, “The City as a Brand: Orchestrating a Unique Experience,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 20.

an identity becomes a concrete image without substance, a packet without the contents.”²¹ Instead, he posits that “to be effective and durable, [identity] has to arise out of the prevailing social relationships between the initiators and the populations and activities within the areas and the immediate surrounding areas.”²² It would follow then that a neighborhood will encounter difficulty if their unique name does not reflect the existing populations and stakeholders.

If it is applied from the outside (such as at the hands of a public relations expert, for example), rather than originating within the community, most audiences will doubt the authenticity and veracity of the claim to a neighborhood name. A whimsical name such as DUMBO actually is believable because the neighborhood was populated with artists and other creative residents – people who could believably propose such an unconventional name.

Cuba and Hummon’s research suggests that a neighborhood name can come to represent social identity, ultimately creating a situation of mutual reinforcement – the collective/social identity reinforces the image of a place (if all residents engaged in a similar work, for example, or if the buildings are all of a certain style), and the name of the place soon becomes the shorthand for that identity – for that group of people. If, as the research suggests, individuals seek to connect with, identify with and internalize the character of their neighborhood, its image and its story as a symbol for their own identity, then it follows that the neighborhood name will become a signifier for this story and image – and for the residents.

This idea of image as a vital part of identity leads to a greater discussion of image, imaging the city, and how it is all related to place naming.

IMAGING THE CITY

The study of environmental images has produced a substantial literature on how images are constructed, communicated and interpreted. Ashworth and Voogd provide a succinct definition of the creation of images, suggesting that they are

²¹ Hedly Smyth, *Marketing the City: The Role of Flagship Developments in Urban Regeneration* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1994), 243.

²² Hedly Smyth, *Marketing the City: The Role of Flagship Developments in Urban Regeneration* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1994), 243.

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...formed from an amalgam of a wide variety of perceptions, in the sense of interactions rather than only visible sensory impulses, of the individual on the world as filtered through the existing personality constructs.²³

Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* focuses on the image of the physical environment and how "paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks are the elements that give form to cities by evoking an image."²⁴ The city's name thus becomes the signifier for this collection of elements that together signify the city. According to Lynch, image is comprised of three inseparable elements: identity, meaning "individuality or oneness"; structure, as in the physical manifestation of something; and meaning.²⁵ But his main focus is on the physical aspects of the image of the city.

In contrast to Lynch Sam Bass Warner and Larry Vale point out that:

...all urban imagery, however, is not a product of the built city. Social experience, historical events, human knowledge of all kinds are powerful influences, and they play upon the imagery of places...sometimes an image is more of a symbolic and metaphorical embodiment, as when concepts such as "democratic" or fascistic are associated with particular places; more prosaically, image is what fosters the ambience that constitutes "brand identity." Today...places no longer simply *have images*; they are continually *being imaged* (and re-imaged), often in ways that are highly self-conscious and highly contentious.²⁶

While Vale and Warner emphasize the nature of images and the fact of their constant evolution, Eugenie Ladner Birch elaborates on how exactly images change. She suggests that "images develop incrementally: When one image seemingly dominates, it is already in a state of change."²⁷ In her discussion of the participants responsible for changing an image, she also highlights the increased number of people interested in such a role. She uses the example of Bronx in the late 20th century where "increasingly, multiple players vie for and clash over the right to determine the destiny of a place." In her analysis of the interplay between the policy, local politics, government and

²³ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City: Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 83.

²⁴ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, (Cambridge, MA: Technology Press, 1960), 46.

²⁵ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, (Cambridge, MA: Technology Press, 1960), 8.

²⁶ Larry J. Vale and Sam Bass Warner, "Cities, Media, and Imaging," in *Imaging the City: Continuing Struggles and New Directions*, ed. Larry J Vale and Sam Bass Warner (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 2001), xiv-xv.

²⁷ Eugenie Ladner Birch, "From Flames to Flowers: The Role of Planning in Re-Imaging the South Bronx," in *Imaging the City: Continuing Struggles and New Directions*, ed. Larry J Vale and Sam Bass Warner (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 2001), 91.

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community, she concludes that no one actor dominates in the construction of image, but rather, that “image is a result of the interplay of policy, structure and people.”²⁸

Holcomb, meanwhile, highlights the increasing degree to which the Media controls both the construction and the communication of images of cities, as opposed to place-based experiences. She argues that this disconnected view limits the elements that make up our image of the city to only the “more spectacular, iconic, historic, and status-enhancing” pieces that the marketers believe will be attractive to their target markets.²⁹

Vale and Warner also address the role of naming in the imaging of the city, suggesting that the simple “evocation of a neighborhood or city name yields...a clearly imaged stereotype about a never-visited place, based entirely on what has been seen and heard through various forms of media.”³⁰ This comment points the most directly towards the potential and ability of a name to evoke an image and to influence perceptions of a neighborhood, and points to the power of naming in manipulating a neighborhood’s image.

Birch, however, suggests that it is a combination of elements – I would argue, *including* the name of a neighborhood – that contribute to the image of a neighborhood. The multiple players vying for the right to determine the destiny of a place are very often the same ones who are clashing over what name to use – the name that ultimately is adopted will represent those parties who ultimately ‘win’.

Finally, Ashworth and Voogd point out that *promoted* images constitute a small but extremely effective proportion of messages projected about a place. But despite their implied endorsement of promotion as a mechanism for the projection of images, they also note that place-image is often most strongly influenced by activities not explicitly intended to promote a place. For example, mention of a place name in art, literature, music, or coverage of a place by the press will often have a residual and powerful effect on the construction of place-images.³¹

²⁸ Eugenie Ladner Birch, “From Flames to Flowers: The Role of Planning in Re-Imaging the South Bronx,” in *Imaging the City: Continuing Struggles and New Directions*, ed. Larry J Vale and Sam Bass Warner (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 2001), 61.

²⁹ Briavel Holcomb, “Place Marketing: Using Media to Promote Cities,” in *Imaging the City: Continuing Struggles and New Directions*, ed. Larry J Vale and Sam Bass Warner (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 2001), 39.

³⁰ Larry J. Vale and Sam Bass Warner, “Cities, Media, and Imaging,” in *Imaging the City: Continuing Struggles and New Directions*, ed. Larry J Vale and Sam Bass Warner (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 2001), xvi.

³¹ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 111.

MARKETING THE CITY

Returning to the multiplicity of images that contribute to the identity of the city, the problem of the “intrinsic complexity of places” is raised by Ashworth and Voogd in their discussion of place, image and marketing. Even though marketing often suggests the purchase of goods and services, Ashworth and Voogd have extended the definition here to include “the decisions by individuals about their actual use of places.”³² They suggest that the commodification of place “by means of a rigorous selection from its many characteristics” will ultimately allow the creation of a “place-image”³³ which is then simple enough to be marketed to “consumers.”

Related to the discussion by Harvey and Florian on the imperatives of building a distinct identity for the city, Philip Kotler has suggested that places are “products, whose identities and values must be designed and marketed...[and] places that fail to market themselves successfully face the risk of economic stagnation and decline.”³⁴ This leads us to a brief review of the scholarship on city marketing. Naming in this context is part and parcel of the communication and marketing of the city’s image. A name is the vital element that communicates in a word, what that neighborhood offers to the outside world.

Of the many tools at the city’s disposal to attract industry and tourists, Kotler criticizes many cities on focusing their marketing efforts solely on promotional activities that are often ad hoc and piecemeal. He argues that such an approach offers cities little hope of sustained, successful revitalization. In contrast, he proposes a more comprehensive problem-solving framework of “market-oriented strategic planning”, or strategic place marketing, which encompasses four key factors: infrastructure provision, cultural attractions, communication of image and quality of life, and human resources.³⁵ In this framework, naming falls under the “communication of image” category; the salient point being that naming is only one of a comprehensive toolkit of factors that must work together in order to sustain long-term growth and reinvestment.

Ashworth and Voogd highlight the link between city marketing (i.e., Kotler’s “market-oriented strategic planning”) and physical planning, pointing out that a “city marketing plan is inseparably

³² Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 78.

³³ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 77.

³⁴ Philip Kotler, Donald H. Haider, and Irving Rein, *Marketing Places : Attracting Investment, Industry, And Tourism To Cities, States, And Nations*, (New York : Free Press, 1993), 11.

³⁵ Philip Kotler, Donald H. Haider, and Irving Rein, *Marketing Places : Attracting Investment, Industry, And Tourism To Cities, States, And Nations*, (New York : Free Press, 1993), 17-20.

linked with spatial policy, and especially with the physical structure plan which is largely instrumental in determining the dimensions of the future 'product.'³⁶

In their view, the traditional, Lynch-ian approach to constructing the image of the city was to focus on the construction of landmarks, or "supply-side planning." Their criticism of this approach is that it was focused on what was already in place, i.e. existing conditions, but fails to incorporate the needs and desires of users into strategic decisions about the built environment. Instead, they advocate for shift in approach from the more typical "supply-oriented" approach to physical planning to a "demand-oriented" marketing planning approach. This approach encourages city planners to consider "the city and possible changes of the urban facility structure...from the perspective of the actual and potential consumers."³⁷ In effect, it calls on planners to participate in

...a more positive encouragement of the desirable rather than the prevention of the undesirable... [via] the shaping and projection of suitable urban images through the built environment and similarly the removal of aspects of the built environment which contribute towards negative images of the city.³⁸

On a different note, Ashworth and Voogd also address the challenge of conjuring images that reflect the inherent complexity of the city. They suggest that "places could be marketed through their generalized images even though the goods and services being sold were difficult to specify" as much as "images could be marketed while the product to which they are related remained only vaguely delineated in the background."³⁹

BRANDING

Scholars of branding have suggested that "a brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors."⁴⁰ Given that "the name is the

³⁶ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 23.

³⁷ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 23.

³⁸ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 26.

³⁹ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 20.

⁴⁰ David Aaker, *Managing Brand Equity*, (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 7.

basic core indicator for the brand, the basis for both awareness and communication efforts”⁴¹ then the name of a neighborhood can be considered its brand.

Discussions of “city branding” raise several issues that are relevant to and reflected at the neighborhood level, especially as we begin to consider the name of the neighborhood as its brand. Hans Mommaas points out that beyond the economic imperatives that Kotler et al. discuss in the context of marketing the city, there has emerged a socio-cultural need to “introduce order and certainty into what is in principle a chaotic reality.”⁴² Brands can provide “a source of orientation” in a fast-changing, increasingly mobile world of deconstructed realities “in which once established frameworks or identification and differentiation (such as those of nation, class, religion, modernity and region/city) have become less distinct.”⁴³

David Aaker has suggested that “Brand Identity” is a set of associations that describe the brand – what the brand stands for and represents to consumers.⁴⁴ One of the most powerful aspects of this brand identity are the “self-expressive benefits” of the brand – how the brand can become symbols of the person’s self concept – how it allows a person to communicate his or her self-image.⁴⁵ As such, the city’s image moves beyond purely the marketing imperative promoted by Kotler, et al, and now takes on a larger role as a “means of identification and mobility in a situation,”⁴⁶ no longer “...merely a source of differentiation, but also of identification, recognition, continuity and collectivity.”⁴⁷ This reinforces much of what we read in the literature on the construction of identity and the links to naming and places.

While “in *principle*, [product] and place branding is the same,” many experts in branding emphasize that in practice, place branding has many more layers of complexity, posing a greater challenge due to the existence of multiple stakeholders, often with competing interests. Additional

⁴¹ David Aaker, *Managing Brand Equity*, (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 187.

⁴² Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 36.

⁴³ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 36.

⁴⁴ David Aaker and Erich Joachimsthaler, *Brand Leadership*, (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 47.

⁴⁵ David Aaker. *Building Strong Brands*. New York: The Free Press, 1996. 99; Russel W. Belk, “Possessions and the Extended Self,” in *Journal of Consumer Research*, September 1998. 139.

⁴⁶ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 36.

⁴⁷ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 34.

challenges unique to place branding and its multiple stakeholders is the frequent lack of unity of purpose; the absence of a single “owner” of the brand or a central authority to manage the brand, and the related loss of control over the image that is projected.⁴⁸

In the face of this reality, we are warned of the danger of “top-down” city branding, wherein the central authority, in seeking to maintain control over coherence and normality runs the risk of keeping an image at a purely superficial level. Such a strategy often results in the suppression of authentic and unscripted elements that might evoke the depth of character sought by individuals.⁴⁹ Government or elected officials are not the only ones at risk of this. Anyone who is a “booster” promoting a brand (or a neighborhood) but who is not able to deliver on the “brand promise” (maintain the associations one has with the image and identity of the neighborhood) runs the risk of losing credibility and legitimacy.

An additional risk is the tendency to hold on to an image beyond its relevant shelf-life...where a city has to “hang on stubbornly to a previously chosen image.”⁵⁰ Mommaas points out that the accelerated nature of the experience economy, the shelf life of any initiative is that much shorter, requiring more attention and constant updating in order to maintain momentum.⁵¹ In either case, he argues that a sustainable image is one which is broad enough to allow for flexibility. Finally, he points out the need to ensure whatever the final ‘brand’ image is projected remains sensitive to and inclusive of the community beyond the rising urban middle class, because the endorsement of the new image by the masses is vital to its successful adoption.

Despite the challenges raised by the added layers of complexity and the temptation to engage in top-down branding, the power of the neighborhood name as a brand is clearly an indication of the potency of naming as a tool. Equally compelling is the power of the name as a brand to contribute to the personal identity and self-concept of those who come in contact with the brand. Similar to the rationale that compels individuals to purchase brand-name goods, there is a compulsion to seek out brand-name places, ones that promise a certain boost to the person’s image. The caveats and cautionary commentary regarding staying true to the brand promise, however, remains fundamental

⁴⁸ Randall Frost, “Mapping a Country's Future,” *Brandchannel.com*, (April 19, 2004), http://www.brandchannel.com/features_effect.asp?pf_id=206 (accessed July 24, 2004).

⁴⁹ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 38.

⁵⁰ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 42.

⁵¹ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 42.

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to successful neighborhood naming – the neighborhood must be able to stand up to scrutiny, must reflect the image projected by the brand, and in the case of a name change, must deliver on the implication that other changes are also occurring.

ADOPTION OF NAMES

Whether or not a new name and place image is adopted or embraced is closely related to many of these discussions, based mainly on the credibility of the proposed name and image. Credibility is vital in two contexts: in terms of the appropriateness of the imagery to the place, as well as the form of the media delivering the message.

David Aaker offers several criteria fundamental to determining the strength and appropriateness of a brand name—and therefore the likelihood of its being adopted. First and foremost, it must be easy to learn and remember. It should be unusual enough to attract attention or arouse curiosity, have something about it that is interesting (such as a pun, an alliteration, or humor), elicit a mental picture or image, and it should evoke some emotion.⁵² In addition to "memorability", desired criteria for a name include the ability to: support a symbol or slogan, suggest desired associations without being boring or trivial, be authentic, credible and comfortable and not raise false expectations.⁵³

Once the appropriate name has been selected, the effective adoption of a place image (and its name) is based on the credibility of the information that delivers the message. In other words, "in order to be effective information must not only be transmitted along the appropriate communication channels to reach potential customers...it must also be accepted. If a piece of information is to be incorporated into the cognitive image of a place, it must be credible."⁵⁴ Credibility is dependent on the source as well as the style of presentation of the information. Ashworth and Voogd suggest that "official information, namely that endorsed by national or local official agencies, including local authorities, is rated as more 'authentic', and thus more likely to be accepted than that produced by commercial firms."⁵⁵

⁵² David Aaker, *Managing Brand Equity*, (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 190.

⁵³ David Aaker, *Managing Brand Equity*, (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 196.

⁵⁴ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 109.

⁵⁵ Gregory John Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City : Marketing Approaches In Public Sector Urban Planning*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 109.

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To understand effective strategies for the successful integration of new place names into the vernacular, it is instructive to examine the example of the construction of Chicago place names in the 1920s, explored by Sudhir Venkatesh in his article on the Chicago School of Social Scientists. The study illustrates the means by which these researchers and city bureaucrats established a neighborhood naming system in their “attempts to order the metropolis.”⁵⁶ The system was initially designed to facilitate the observation and recording of demographic changes over the long term, based on information collected from various municipal and state agencies. However, contrary to their intention to simply observe existing phenomena, their effort in fact resulted in the introduction of new neighborhood names and boundaries to many communities throughout the City of Chicago.

To ensure that data collected from all possible sources would be comparable, the researchers had sought to have their naming system embraced as the municipal standard, achieving this by the extensive lobbying of public officials, educators, and other influential politicians. The researchers were able to convince charitable and social service organizations to adopt their classification system, tapping into a network that had tremendous influence on the public’s perception and understanding of the structure of the city. Venkatesh notes, “...community-based publishers of local directories used the community area to list schools, churches, social organizations, resources and activities, and political representatives. Given the significantly wide circulation of these resource guides, the community area became incorporated into local discourse and into the minds of inhabitants through their local organizations.”⁵⁷

Despite having been completely fabricated at the time, the neighborhood names along with their histories and identities have now become so embedded in the consciousness of Chicagoans that they were given protection in 1993 by city ordinance to prevent residents from changing them.⁵⁸ This experience highlights the possibility that even the most artificial and constructed urban

⁵⁶ In order to establish a definitive map and understanding of the neighborhoods in Chicago, researchers interviewed residents and conducted extensive research on existing placenames in municipal documents. As would be expected, there were many contradictions and overlapping definitions, so in cases where there were conflicting names or boundaries or the neighborhood was considered too small, the researchers “creatively consolidated the neighborhood and subcommunity units into 75 ‘community areas’” with many of the now-familiar Chicago designations.

Sudhir Venkatesh, “Chicago’s Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community,” *Social Science History* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 311, 289-291.

⁵⁷ Sudhir Venkatesh, “Chicago’s Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community,” *Social Science History* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 292.

⁵⁸ Sudhir Venkatesh, “Chicago’s Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community,” *Social Science History* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 309.

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placenames and boundaries could hold if they are used consistently, embraced and introduced by those who are perceived to be in positions of authority and influence.

In his conclusion, Venkatesh does touch on two of the features of renaming that the Chicago School experience illustrates – that “determining the logical, rational demarcation of the city landscape did not by itself guarantee eventual adoption by a wider public, and only through direct lobbying and application of the community area framework did the naming scheme become adopted into broader discourse and practice.”⁵⁹

Finally, Thomas Blom Hansen asserts that “the efficacy of a name, and thus an identity, in terms of the fixing or accruing of meaning and connotations, depends, therefore, on its constant performance—in authoritative writing, in public speech, images, songs, rumors, and so on.”⁶⁰ These criteria point to additional ways in which one might be able to establish whether a name has been adopted and embraced.

TOOLS OF GOVERNMENT ACTION

As has been discussed above, renaming campaigns have originated within the community, from a developer, property owners, business owner, or local residents. When a government decides to rename a neighborhood, it will often be reacting to situations that have been already established by the market or individual citizens. Thus, the government is but one of many actors who are involved in naming neighborhoods, and often not the primary or lead actor.

Despite the diverse parties who may initiate a place name change, it is still instructive to examine the idea of naming in the “tools of public policy and government action” framework, in order to appreciate the idea of naming as a tool in and of itself, whether employed by government, the private sector, or residents. This approach attempts to distill “what government does” to a limited group of mechanisms that it might employ in various combinations and permutations in order to accomplish the desired end.⁶¹

The idea of using a name as more than a marketing device, and instead as a mechanism to compel action and change, allows us to induce that neighborhood naming falls into the category of “Information” tools. In explaining why information might be used as a tool, one theory posited by

⁵⁹ Sudhir Venkatesh, “Chicago’s Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community,” *Social Science History* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 311.

⁶⁰ Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3.

⁶¹ Christopher C. Hood, *The Tools of Government* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1983), 2.

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Vedung and van der Doelen is the “legitimizing” theory, suggests that the tool of “information is used for the political purpose for paving the road for stronger interventions...to accord legitimacy for stronger measures” yet to come.⁶²

On a simplified scale, Christopher Hood has established 2 super-categories, detecting and effecting, against which 4 general groups of government resources can be brought to bear, resulting in 8 mega-tools.⁶³ Following this framework, *naming*, as a variant of *Information* is an “effector” tool – i.e., a “tool that government can use to try to have make an impact on the world” – which draws on the government resource of “nodality,” i.e. that of “being in the middle of an information or social network.”⁶⁴ As a mechanism that aims to contribute to the image and identity of a place, naming is a very symbolic effector, with the most effective names often evoking vibrant and compelling images and associations. The name given to a place, a vital part of human perception and interpretation, can be manipulated in order to influence actions and outcomes.

In support of Hood’s framework, Vedung and van der Doelen offer a broad definition of information as a tool, suggesting that it encompasses all kinds of “government-directed attempts at influencing people through the transfer of knowledge, communication of reasoned argument, and moral suasion,” including methods such as “public communication campaigns...diffusion of printed materials... *labeling* [my emphasis], training programs, education efforts,” and more.⁶⁵ Despite the difference in nomenclature, naming is no different than labeling, and while in many cases, naming can be thought of as an arbitrary choice, in is just as often the result of a deliberate choice that is intended to reflect or support a given (or desired) identity of a place.

Finally, to complement the idea of government action, Mommaas introduces the idea that naming can be a tool for community action, by suggesting that naming has the potential to “...provide sources of civic pride, a certain sense of community, the filling of the public domain, a feeling of development and direction.”⁶⁶

⁶² Evert Vedung and Frans C.J. van der Doelen, “Sermon – Information Programs in the Public Policy Process – Choice, Effects and Evaluation,” in *Carrots, Sticks and Sermons – Policy Instruments and Their Evaluation*, ed. Marie-Louise Bemelmans-Videc, Ray C. Rist and Evert Vedung (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 113.

⁶³ Christopher C. Hood, *The Tools of Government*, (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1983), 4.

⁶⁴ Christopher C. Hood, *The Tools of Government*, (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1983), 21.

⁶⁵ Evert Vedung and Frans C.J. van der Doelen, “Sermon – Information Programs in the Public Policy Process – Choice, Effects and Evaluation,” in *Carrots, Sticks and Sermons – Policy Instruments and Their Evaluation*, ed. Marie-Louise Bemelmans-Videc, Ray C. Rist and Evert Vedung (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 103.

⁶⁶ Hans Mommaas, “City Branding: The Necessity of Socio-Cultural Goals,” in *City Branding: Image Building & Building Image*, ed. Urban Affairs and Véronique Patteuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 44.

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As seen in Chicago, the adoption and use of a neighborhood name by an ‘official’ body such as the government leverages their unique position to legitimize, standardize and disseminate information in order to popularize it. This can occur whether it is a name introduced by any other party or when the name has its origins in government itself. In the latter case, naming falls even more clearly into the category of tools of information, perhaps more along the lines of propaganda.⁶⁷

In considering neighborhood naming as a tool that allows the re-casting of a neighborhood image, the objective is certainly to induce additional investment – there can be little expectation that naming alone will result in neighborhood change. Thus, naming might be considered as an early step to enabling further development, but is only one piece of an overall strategy to drive regeneration and neighborhood revitalization. Once named, a place can be the target of other interventions using other tools, but without a name, a place remains unidentified, unable to be the target of anything.

SUMMARY

These literatures have clearly made the case for the need for neighborhoods to create an identity to distinguish themselves from one another. Once the identity is established, neighborhoods can employ naming as a mechanism by which they can communicate their identity to the outside world. Again, while naming in many cases is not suggested explicitly, there are strong relationships that suggest that naming is one way to communicate their identity and image. It suggests that such mechanisms are already used by government and others as tools to effect change, but that there are still gaps in the scholarship relating specifically to naming as a tool in this respect.

In the case studies that will follow, I will attempt to understand how these three neighborhoods have attempted to harness their identity and image, and to actively change it via naming, in order to attract more investment and redevelopment attention.

⁶⁷ Christopher C. Hood, *The Tools of Government* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1983), 29.

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III. Case Study: DUMBO¹, Brooklyn

The Brooklyn neighborhood of DUMBO (Down under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) lies primarily in the area between the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges. The neighborhood is isolated from the rest of Brooklyn by the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) and the two bridges that demarcate its boundaries. Visitors descend from other parts of



Figure 1: DUMBO (bottom half of the picture, between the bridges) and the view of Manhattan

Brooklyn into a neighborhood with magnificent views of Lower Manhattan, cobble stoned streets, old warehouses, and a brand new waterfront park. While the boundaries of DUMBO are somewhat inexact and constantly shifting, the heart of the area remains quite small – approximately 24 blocks.

Despite having been coined in the early 1970s, the DUMBO name has only taken hold as a commonly used neighborhood moniker since the mid-1990s. Thirty years ago the first artists arrived in a desolate, abandoned area to occupy the vacant warehouses, establishing the roots of a vibrant art community that today is the core of the identity of DUMBO. Before DUMBO, the area was known at various points in time as Gairville, Fulton Ferry, Fulton Landing, Between the Bridges, and even (incorrectly) Downtown Brooklyn. It also was nameless and forgotten for quite a while, really more the edge of neighborhoods adjacent to it -- Fulton Ferry to the west, Vinegar Hill to the east, and Farragut Public Housing complexes to the SouthEast.

¹ Spellings of DUMBO vary between using periods between each letter (D.U.M.B.O) to indicate its origins as an acronym, and simply letting the letters run together. The majority of references to DUMBO today do not include the periods, indicating that the name has become a word in its own right, and no longer an acronym, pointing to another milestone in the adoption of the neighborhood name. As such, in this thesis I have chosen to use the spelling with out the periods, DUMBO.

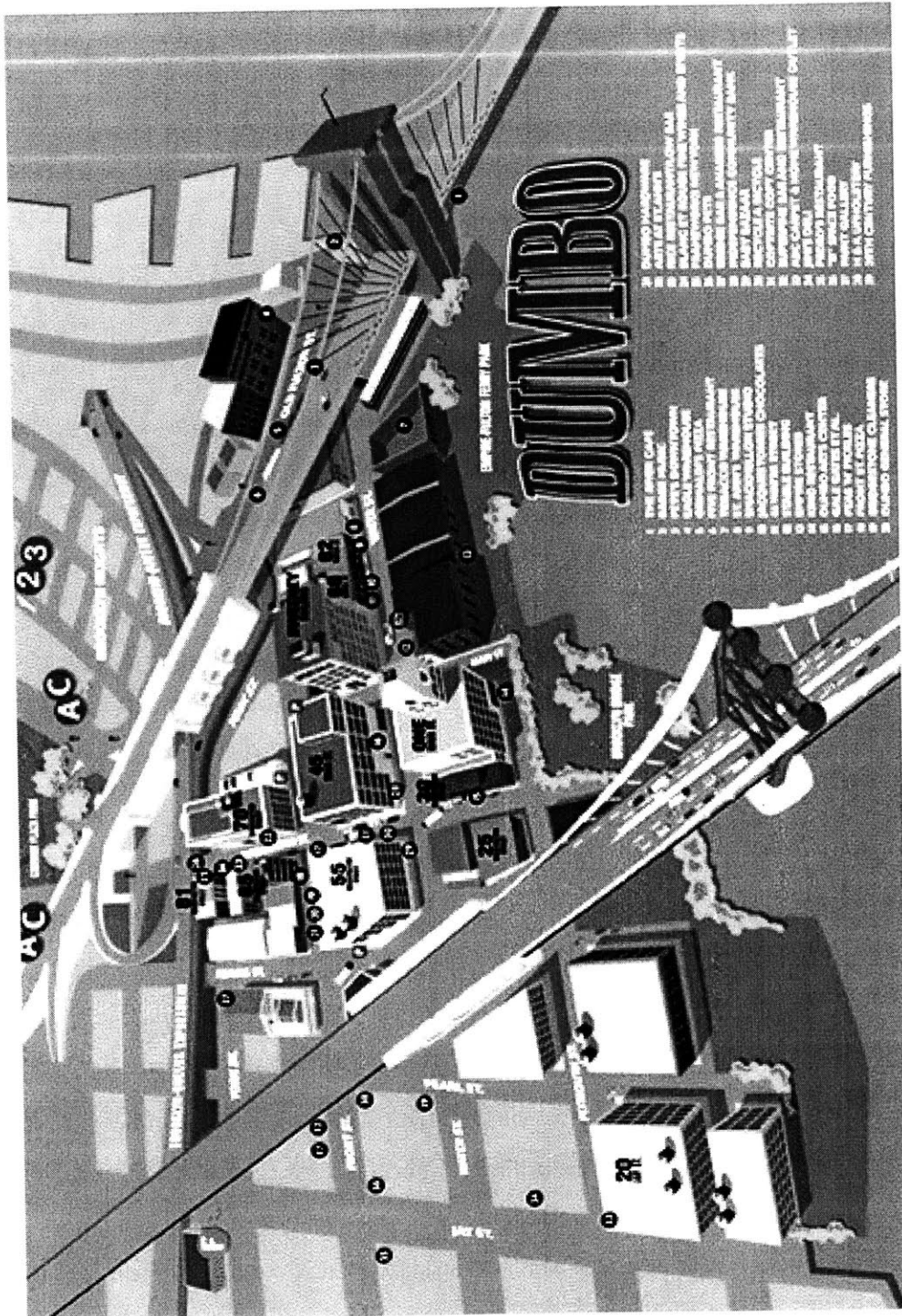


Figure 2: Map of DUMBO²

² Two Trees Management, 2003.

The creation of the name DUMBO by the first intrepid resident artists was symbolic of their ability to imagine that the area could be more than an abandoned warehouse district. Had they only considered their stop in the area as a random opportunity to pay cheap rents for large spaces rather than for building a community and a neighborhood, they would have never considered naming the area anything. But in this case, the artists had a vision for the entire area, recognized that it could be a neighborhood and more than just empty factories and warehouses.

The popular rise of the DUMBO name has coincided with the neighborhood's revitalization. Neither would have occurred without certain key conditions having been put in place to allow the neighborhood to flourish. These conditions include a change in zoning from manufacturing to allow residential uses and changes in political leadership of the city that brought in leaders more favorable to objectives of loft conversion, and the trend of using culture and the arts to generate interest in less desirable neighborhoods. Interest in the area was further fuelled by the heated competition for space in Manhattan in the late 1990s that put upward pressures on the cost of residential, cultural, and commercial space, leading many tenants to look for space outside of Manhattan.

The neighborhood and the name also benefited from the fact that the majority of the property in DUMBO is controlled by one management company, Two Trees Management. Their extensive holdings in DUMBO have allowed them to exert considerable control over the evolving identity of the neighborhood. While Two Trees was not the originator of the moniker, it has been instrumental in bringing the name DUMBO to the fore, building the DUMBO brand and crafting its identity by using their position to both strategically engineer the development of the neighborhood and promote the neighborhood to the outside world. They leveraged the distinctive (if slightly silly) name to allow their properties to stand out amidst the clutter of competing messages.

Today the area has grown in popularity and amenities to become a highly desirable residential neighborhood with a thriving business district of new media and design practices, and a destination for visitors, replete with retail, bars and restaurants. DUMBO has transformed itself into a vibrant community. Ironically, many of the original artists who established and contributed to the neighborhood's identity are no longer able to afford to remain. That fact, however, is besides the point for this thesis. However, it is interesting to note that the identity of the neighborhood has remained, even when the original sources of such imagery and associations have been forced to move out.

HISTORY

The area known today as DUMBO was until the 1970s, part of a larger area called Fulton Ferry Landing, considered by many as “the place where Brooklyn began.”³ For much of the 17th-19th centuries, the area was the site of ferry landings for boats to and from Manhattan, and the main point from which Brooklyn farmers sent their produce to the Manhattan markets. The main street leading to the ferry landing was the primary commercial thoroughfare, and when Robert Fulton established a steam ferry service in 1814 at one of the ferry landings, the main road was named Fulton Street in his honor, and the ferry landing Fulton Ferry Landing.

The area along the water developed into a neighborhood of mixed uses including shipping and warehousing, cattle yards and storehouses, all surrounded by a residential community of workers and local shopkeepers. Industries seeking to locate as close to the waterfront as possible built large, “fireproof” buildings to house their iron foundries, sugar refineries and gas light companies. Shipping and goods companies also built extensive port warehouses in the area.⁴

The blocks that today make up the core of DUMBO first distinguished themselves from the larger area of Fulton Ferry Landing when Robert Gair brought his box-making business to the area in 1887. Gair built an extensive complex of ten factories and industrial lofts that soon became known as “Gairville.”⁵ For over sixty years the area was home to the Gair factories as well as to several other major manufacturers. But soon after Gair’s arrival, the first of major infrastructure developments hit the area, rendering the waterfront obsolete as a center of shipping and cutting the neighborhood off from the rest of Brooklyn. First, the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883 and the Manhattan Bridge in 1909 allowed vehicles to bypass the area, turning Downtown Brooklyn into the borough’s transportation and manufacturing hub.

The bridges also severed Gairville from the other neighborhoods along the waterfront – Fulton Ferry Landing on the west, Vinegar Hill⁶ and the Brooklyn Navy Yard to the east. Rendered

³ Frank E. Chaney, *Fulton Ferry – Vinegar Hill*, Unpublished Report for the New York City Department of City Planning, (Brooklyn Borough Office, December 1990), 6.

⁴ Marcia Reiss, *Fulton Ferry Landing, DUMBO, Vinegar Hill Neighborhood History Guide*, (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Historical Society, 2001), 14.

⁵ Marcia Reiss, *Fulton Ferry Landing, DUMBO, Vinegar Hill Neighborhood History Guide*, (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Historical Society, 2001), 18.

⁶ The residential area of Vinegar Hill, established adjacent to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, was constructed to house the immigrants who were attracted to jobs in the nearby Navy Yard and industrial districts. The developer of the housing had chosen the name to attract Irish immigrants in the early 1800s, hoping its reference to the “1798 Battle of Vinegar Hill, the last stand in a failed Irish rebellion against the British”⁶ would prove lucrative. His strategy was successful, so much so that the area became known as “Irish Town,” a name that spilled over into the rest of Fulton Ferry (including

obsolete by the trains and bridges, Fulton Ferry ceased operating in 1924, precipitating the area's decline that was only further exacerbated by the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) in 1950.⁷ Running across the southern end of the neighborhood, the BQE left the area completely cut off from the rest of Brooklyn, and was the final blow to the neighborhood.

Cut off from Downtown Brooklyn and Brooklyn Heights by the BQE and the Bridges, most manufacturing uses abandoned the area. By 1967 the Brooklyn Navy Yard had closed and the Gair Company and others had emptied their factories and warehouses, selling the buildings to landlords who leased space to smaller manufacturers. The area became a ghost town. It was considered "a dangerous place to walk at night,"⁸ with "packs of wild dogs running around."⁹ The entire area of Fulton Landing, including the Gair complex, continued to use the name Fulton Ferry ostensibly because there was nothing else there to prompt a different moniker (see Fig.3).

In 1969 the New York City Housing and Development Administration issued a proposal called "The Fulton Ferry Urban Renewal Plan" that encompassed the entire area west of the Manhattan Bridge (including most of today's DUMBO).¹⁰ One of the key structures targeted for demolition under the Fulton Ferry Urban Renewal Plan was the Empire Stores, a large warehouse used from 1869 through the mid-20th century as one of many dry goods storage warehouses that were erected along the waterfront. Out of concern for the historic building, community members from nearby neighborhoods campaigned and successfully acquired City Landmark Status for the Empire Stores.

Soon after, the entire district around the Empire Stores was landmarked and placed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Fulton Landing Historic District. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission also approved the designation of the Fulton Ferry Historic District (called sometimes the Fulton Ferry Landing Historic District), for which the boundaries coincided with those of the National and State District.

today's DUMBO) in the years after the Civil War, before the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges separated the neighborhoods from one another.

Marcia Reiss, *Fulton Ferry Landing, DUMBO, Vinegar Hill Neighborhood History Guide*, (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Historical Society, 2001), 27-30.

⁷ Marcia Reiss, *Fulton Ferry Landing, DUMBO, Vinegar Hill Neighborhood History Guide*, (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Historical Society, 2001), 11.

⁸ Emily Denito, "Down Under's Rise – Brooklyn Waterfront Area Lures With Views," *Crain's New York Business*, 28 September 1998.

⁹ Toni Schlesinger, "Shelter: Loft in former spice warehouse," *The Village Voice*, 17–23 November 1999.

¹⁰ Frank E. Chaney, *Fulton Ferry – Vinegar Hill*, Unpublished Report for the New York City Department of City Planning, (Brooklyn Borough Office, December 1990), 34.

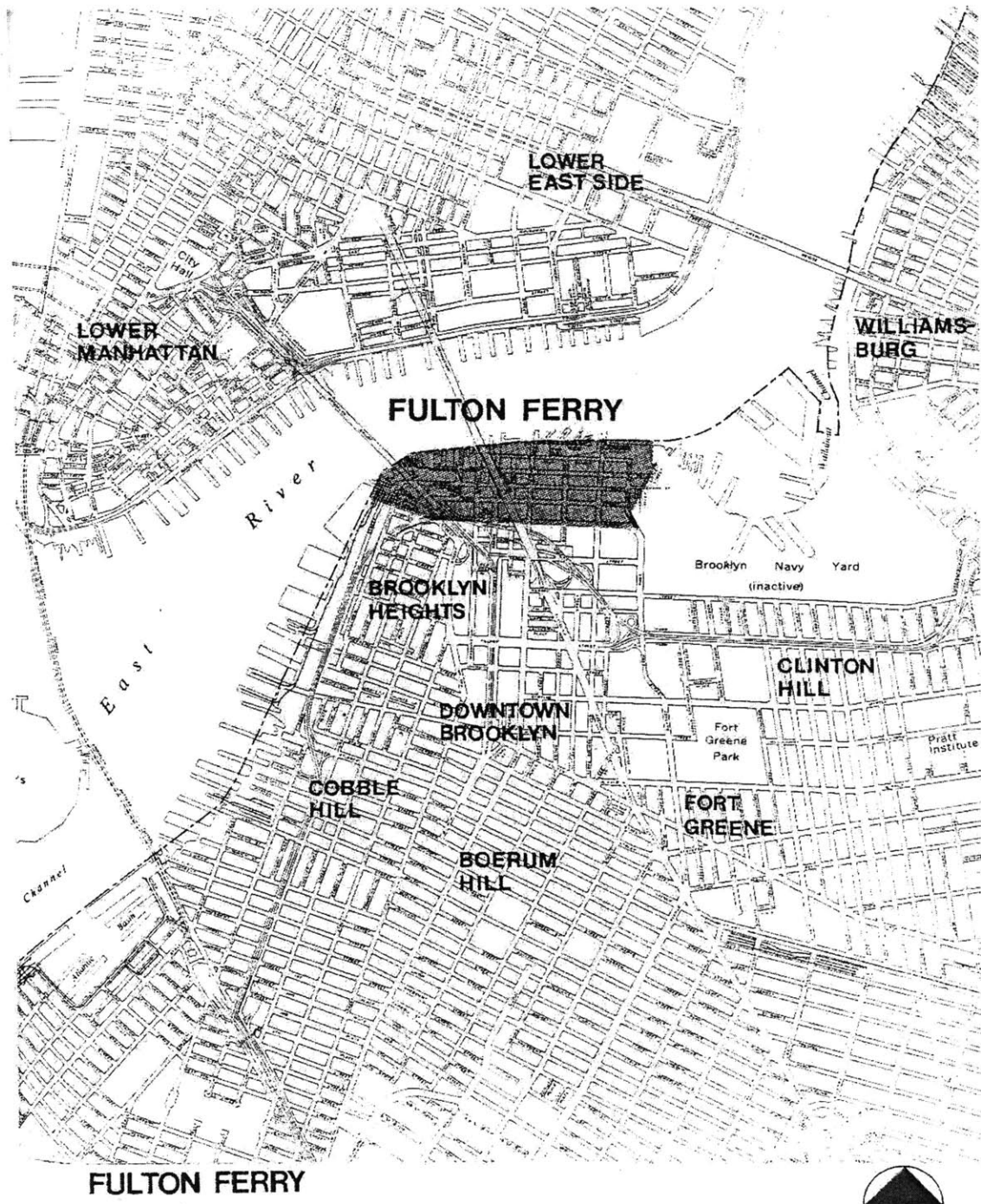
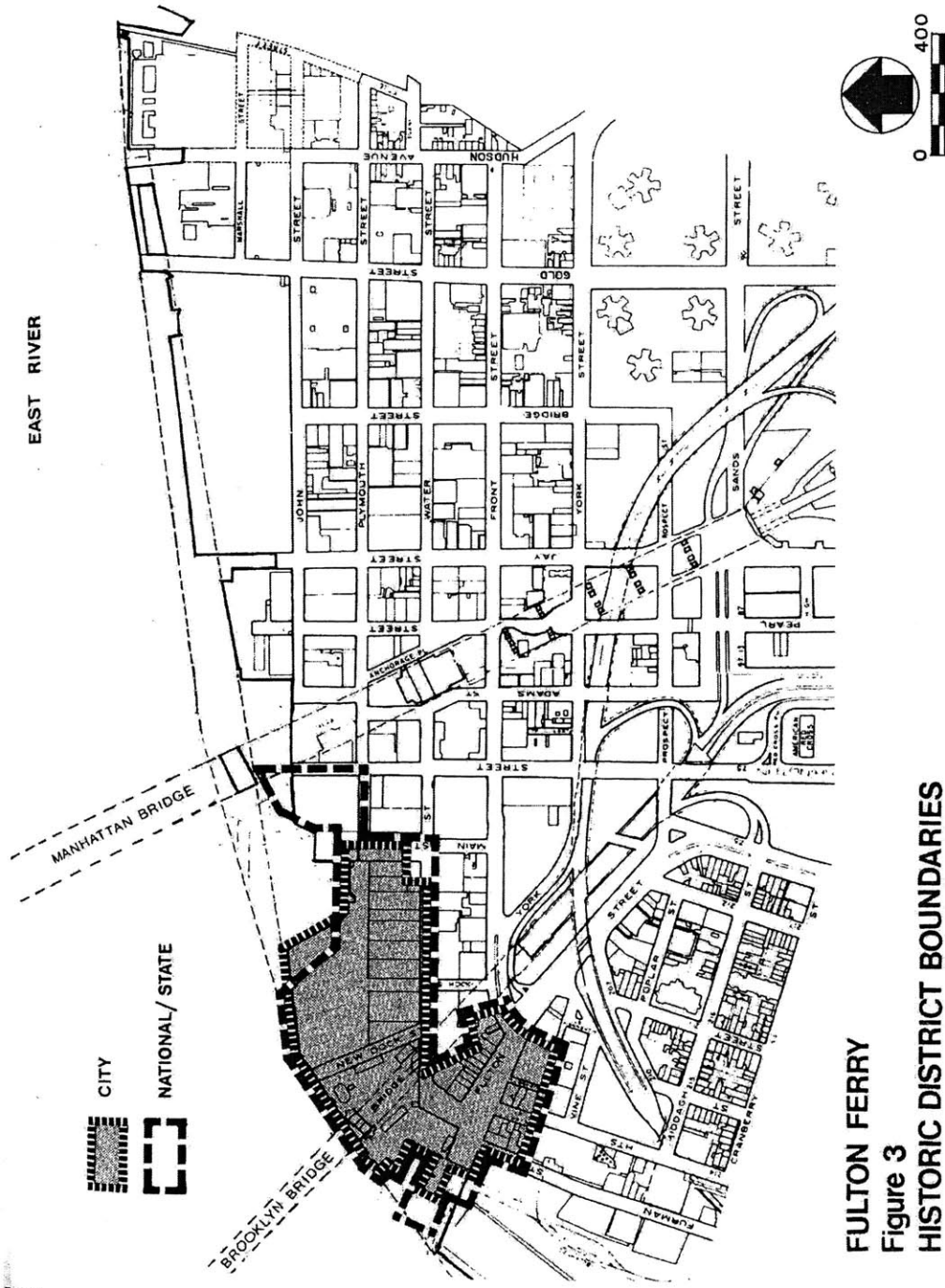


Figure 3: 1983: “Fulton Ferry”¹¹

¹¹ The City of New York, Department of City Planning. *Fulton Ferry* (New York: New York City Department of City Planning, February 1983).



FULTON FERRY
Figure 3
HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

Figure 4: Fulton Ferry Landing Historic Distict Boundaries¹²

¹² The City of New York, Department of City Planning. *Fulton Ferry* (New York: New York City Department of City Planning, February 1983).

Significantly, at all three levels of government (Municipal, State, Federal) the historic district did not extend east of the Empire Stores to include the blocks that are today considered DUMBO. Instead, the district extended to the West of the Brooklyn Bridge, with a slight ‘spur’ to the east to include the Empire Stores (see Fig.4). The rest of the DUMBO area was excluded and considered separate from the Fulton Landing neighborhood. Despite the exclusion of the DUMBO area, it is still instructive to understand the experience of the Fulton Ferry/Fulton Landing neighborhood as an example of the community leveraging the tools of government regulation and information to preserve the name of a neighborhood. In this case, the codification of the name was secondary to the larger concern of preserving the history and architecture of the area. However, this does not diminish the contribution of the name (and the historical associations it conjures) to the neighborhood’s identity.

EARLY CONVERSIONS

At the same time as the preservationists were working to landmark the Fulton Landing area, several architects obtained zoning permission to acquire and convert some of the abandoned industrial buildings in that same area into residential properties. This was all occurring at a time when the city had been faced with an exodus of manufacturing (and manufacturing jobs), and there were concerns that the lack of affordable manufacturing space was to blame for this trend. As a result the city sought to limit the number of buildings eligible for such conversions, and the newly delineated Fulton Ferry Historic District provided the ideal boundaries for such a strategy, even though many of the manufacturing buildings outside the boundaries of the Historic District (such as the Gair buildings) had been vacant for many years. The city’s policy thus solidified the distinction between Fulton Ferry/Fulton Landing and the rest of the area (what would soon become DUMBO).

Despite the zoning restrictions in the remaining areas, interest in their large, abandoned, industrial spaces with abundant natural light and low rents grew, especially among artists and designers who were being priced out of Manhattan. Owners of the buildings agreed to let artists move into the empty commercial spaces, happy to have any tenants at all.¹³

It was at this time that one of the first artist tenants coined the name “DUMBO,” an acronym for “Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass.” According to popular lore, the name had been a sarcastic reaction to the neighborhoods that many of those same artists had recently been forced

¹³ J. A. Lobbia, “Towers & Tenements: The Saga of 223 Water Street,” *The Village Voice*, 15-21 October 1997.

to leave. The influx of artists populating an abandoned, industrial area was reminiscent of the rise of SoHo (South of Houston) and the DUMBO name, as an acronym that referred to the area's geographic markers, seemed fitting.¹⁴ While few thought that the name would be taken seriously, it did provide an identifier for the collection of industrial buildings that were neither in the Fulton Ferry Landing district or the Vinegar Hill neighborhood, and soon it became the popular name of the neighborhood, used primarily among residents and was even adopted by the Brooklyn Loft Tenants Association.¹⁵ Thus the name DUMBO began to evoke images of a neighborhood of artist lofts, a creative community, living in a sometimes eerily quiet and abandoned area. There was a "there" there, and it had a name, but this name would not become well known for another 15 years. Today however, historians acknowledge that "the neighborhood became a true community in the 1970s when artists and loft lovers seeking space outside Manhattan moved into commercial lofts illegally."¹⁶

FIRST ATTEMPTS TO REDEVELOP DUMBO

In 1981 developer David Walentas was seeking the next 'hot' neighborhood. An artist friend told him about DUMBO and the buildings that artists had begun populating in the 1970s. The community that had embraced the name DUMBO had conceived of the area as a neighborhood and saw its potential. That name drew attention to the fact that there was potential in the neighborhood. The Two Trees development strategy had always been to "follow the artists,"¹⁷ so the developer bought the Gair Complex as well as the buildings from the Sweeney Manufacturing Company. While these buildings were still partially occupied by garment manufacturers and heavy industrial tenants, and partially by squatting artists, the company hoped that it could eventually convert the buildings into loft residences and create a success similar to that in SoHo and TriBeCa.¹⁸

Despite their optimistic view, throughout the 1980s Two Trees and other property owners were unsuccessful in securing the zoning changes needed to redevelop their properties into residential and

¹⁴ Carolyn Meiselbach, website for DBA DayHops "DUMBO Dayhop," (Brooklyn: Mei Enterprises, 2002), http://www.dayhops.com/previews/dumbo_preview.htm (accessed January 28, 2004).

¹⁵ Andrew S. Dolkart and the DUMBO Neighborhood Association, "DUMBO Industrial District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1998.

¹⁶ John B. Manbeck, ed. *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 97.

¹⁷ David W. Dunlap, "SoHo, TriBeCa and Now DUMBO?" *The New York Times*, 25 October 1998.

¹⁸ David W. Dunlap, "SoHo, TriBeCa and Now DUMBO?" *The New York Times*, 25 October 1998.

commercial spaces, resulting in minimal investment in the neighborhood.¹⁹ In one case, Two Trees had proposed a development in the early 1980s that would incorporate the Empire Stores and his Gair buildings in a mixed-use project to be called “Fulton Landing.”²⁰ The plan called for the creation of a mixed-use district with residential, commercial and retail spaces, the type of development that conflicted radically with the area’s trademark ‘gritty’ and ‘abandoned’ character and atmosphere. The implication of the plan was that the existing artist community would be displaced and replaced with a mall-like development, replete with parking structures and family-oriented attractions.

Criticisms of the plan came from all sides. Residents of DUMBO were understandably concerned and opposed to any plan that would result in their eviction. Residents of Fulton Ferry Landing pointed out that the name Fulton Landing already existed for another (immediately adjacent) neighborhood, and that Two Trees couldn’t “just take the name of a real place and put it on some other place.”²¹ The Department of City Planning (DCP) remained concerned as ever about the loss of manufacturing in the area, having cautioned in a 1982 analysis against any actions that might jeopardize the stock of available sites for manufacturing and industrial jobs.

In the end the plan was not implemented, its failure to pass due apparently to a personal vendetta between an influential person at City Hall and David Walentas.²² But it is interesting to note that Two Trees had not used the name DUMBO for the development. While it is clear that

¹⁹ In 1981, the city issued an RFP to redevelop the Empire Stores. Through his Two Trees development company Walentas proposed redeveloping the stores into a project called “Fulton Landing” in conjunction with his Gair and Sweeney properties. His vision was to create a mixed-use district with residential, commercial and retail spaces, all of which would require extensive rezoning to allow for new uses, in addition to extensive landmark and environmental reviews. Despite these challenges, the city’s Urban Development Corporation and Public Development Corporation conditionally designated Two Trees as the winning developer for the project.

In 1982, the Department of City Planning released analyses emphasizing the need to preserve and promote manufacturing industries and jobs, and cautioned against any actions that might jeopardize the stock of available sites for manufacturing and industrial jobs. However, their recommendations also included mention of legalization of existing non-conforming residential uses. Ultimately, various political and personal conflicts led to the block the proposed rezoning that would allow Two Trees and other property owners to convert their buildings into residential properties; political wrangling also resulted in the removal of Two Trees as developer of the Empire Stores project; they were unsuccessful in selling or leasing their buildings until 1986, when various State and City agencies moved in on a 10-year lease, attracted to the low rents.

David W. Dunlap, “SoHo, TriBeCa and Now DUMBO?” *The New York Times*, 25 October 1998.

Frank E. Chaney, *Fulton Ferry – Vinegar Hill*, Unpublished Report for the New York City Department of City Planning, (Brooklyn Borough Office, December 1990).

²⁰ David W. Dunlap, “SoHo, TriBeCa and Now DUMBO?” *The New York Times*, 25 October 1998.

²¹ Nancy Webster, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

²² Marcia Vickers, “The Fallen Financier,” *Businessweek*, 9 December 2002, 106.

there were many objectionable elements to the plan and other factors contributing to its failure, one might argue that had Two Trees chosen to use the name DUMBO in their proposal, perhaps the outcome would have been more favorable. Of course, such a strategy would have been a tacit acknowledgement of an existing population and character of the neighborhood, which was in fact in conflict with the Two Trees vision for the area, and suggests why the DUMBO name was not used.

But, it is conceivable that by using the name DUMBO Two Trees might have convinced city officials that conversion recognized the fact that there already was a residential community in place (i.e. the one that used the DUMBO name) which thus warranted conversion. Officials might have therefore promoted the idea of conversion more rigorously rather than falling back and allowing the buildings to remain vacant in the name of manufacturing protection. The developers would have also diminished the opposition of the name Fulton Landing, and also might have appeased some of the DUMBO residents, although their concerns were less about identity and more about preserving the building uses.

Instead, the area remained zoned for manufacturing and industrial uses. Hamstrung by the manufacturing zoning, landlords continued to offer the vacant and expansive warehouse spaces to artists seeking studios and galleries, turning a blind eye to those artists who would then choose to live in their studio space (despite the loft laws that prohibited such arrangements). Though the neighborhood had few of the services one might seek in a residential area and was desolate and abandoned after 5 PM,²³ a community of artists and galleries continued to grow. At one point the community numbered over 600 residents (by some accounts), most of whom were wary of garnering too much attention from the authorities given their illegal residential status. The neighborhood (and its name) and thus kept a low profile through the mid-1990s, resulting in few people knowing about the residential aspect of the neighborhood.²⁴

²³ While waiting for the city to approve their requests for re-zoning, Walentas and other property owners also began to convert the manufacturing uses to commercial and office spaces, but found it difficult to attract companies to the abandoned neighborhood. They ultimately signed 10-year leases with government agencies such as the Department of Labor – these tenants were considered by most as ‘last resort tenants’ because they always seek the lowest rent possible – but they were the only types of commercial tenants that could be drawn to DUMBO.

Chris Havens, Personal Interview, 3 June 2004.

²⁴ Amy Waldman, “Neighborhood Report: Fulton Landing; Rise in Crime Puzzles Pioneering Artists and Writers,” *The New York Times*, 23 November 1997.

NEW ATTEMPTS TO REDEVELOP DUMBO

A new, more sympathetic city administration in the mid-1990's combined with improving real estate markets provided Two Trees with the opportunity to re-introduce their "Fulton Landing" master plan. They proposed converting a portion of their 2.5 million square feet of real estate in the neighborhood into residential and commercial office space. This plan was more sensitive to the existing DUMBO community than the earlier version, and did not include many of the elements from the earlier plans that would have completely changed the character of the area. However, the plan also still had the Fulton Landing name on it.

The plans also caused consternation among DUMBO residents and proponents of an as yet unrealized Brooklyn Bridge Park. The Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition (BBPC), founded mainly by residents of Brooklyn Heights and Fulton Ferry Landing, had been lobbying since 1989 for the creation of a waterfront park that included the waterfront areas of DUMBO. Their concern was that allowing Two Trees to redevelop properties adjacent to the waterfront would limit the likelihood of the creation of the park.

The BBPC had also released numerous studies and master plans as late as 1997 that referred to DUMBO only as the "Interbridge Area."²⁵ In this case, the choice to not use the name DUMBO (but to use Interbridge Area instead) in their documents could be interpreted as a deliberate choice to de-legitimize the claims that DUMBO residents or DUMBO property owners might have on the area. By not using the name DUMBO, the BBPC could deny the existence of the community and ignore the possibility that there might be opposition to their vision for the area.

Meanwhile, the number of people moving into the old factories and warehouses and hearing about the neighborhood through word of mouth had been steadily growing, and the community of artists that had been living in the area, many with the blessing and help of Two Trees, was thriving.

In the fall of 1997 a group of DUMBO artists joined together to "go public with what's happening in the lofts and studios of their riverside enclave."²⁶ Over 120 artists participated in the first "DUMBO: Art Under the Bridge" festival, which would become an annual event that captured

²⁵ The Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation was a Local Development Corporation established by local officials in 1998 and funded by the State. Together the Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition and the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation have advocated over 20 years for the creation of a park along the Brooklyn waterfront, running from the Jay Street in DUBMO to Atlantic Avenue.

Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation, "Brooklyn Bridge Park Master Plan: Overview," (Brooklyn: BBPDC, August 2000), http://www.bbpdc.org/Process/Session_1/Session_2/master_plan_summary.html (accessed November 12, 2003).

²⁶ Peter Marks, "As It Turns Artistic, A Noirish Enclave Steps Into the Light," *The New York Times*, 10 Oct 1997.

the ethos of the neighborhood.²⁷ This was one of the first public events that publicized DUMBO as a place, and specifically, one that was associated with a vibrant arts community. The identity, which had been “percolating” for over twenty years at that point, was rich and authentic, the imagery powerful, and the public was very receptive.

DUMBO residents had also started to become more vocal and active in local community affairs, first becoming involved in Community Board 2’s process to develop a 197-a²⁸ plan for the area. While CB-2 had initiated the process out of desire to block the construction of a garbage incineration plant in the adjacent Brooklyn Navy Yard, it had the side effect of galvanizing the DUMBO community into political action. For example, the 197-a plan provided the community with a vehicle in which to respond to the designs Two Trees had on the neighborhood. The plan was ultimately published with the DUMBO neighborhood name listed alongside those of Vinegar Hill and Fulton Landing. The proposal for the incinerator was successfully struck down, pointing to the new power and legitimacy accorded to the DUMBO neighborhood (and name).²⁹

Recognizing that the neighborhood would likely see more change in the near future, the residents involved in the 197-a plan established the DUMBO Neighborhood Association to advocate for members of the DUMBO community.³⁰ This was the first community organization in the DUMBO neighborhood that recognized and harnessed the power of the residents.

The proposed changes in zoning to allow for residential conversion of one of the Two Trees properties was finally approved in 1998. The developers first introduced 124 luxury condominiums at 1 Main Street – “the first new residential development in the neighborhood in eighty years,”³¹ and began heavily promoting and marketing the area, using the DUMBO name and the cachet of the artists’ district as key elements of the image. The profile of the neighborhood began to grow. Two Trees was generous with journalists looking for an “easy story about real estate” or the

²⁷ Peter Marks, “As It Turns Artistic, A Noirish Enclave Steps Into the Light,” *The New York Times*, 10 Oct 1997.

²⁸ A 197-a plan is a general long-range plan prepared by the community board that can be submitted to the Planning Commission and City Council for approval. The plan is a policy statement and advisory, obligating the city agencies to consider the plan recommendations in making future decisions.

Tom Angotti, “Race, Place and Waste: Community Planning in New York City,” *New Village Journal*, 2 May 1999, 4.

²⁹ The City of New York, Community Board 2, Borough of Brooklyn, *Old Brooklyn District 197-A Plan: Summary of Recommendations*. 16 May 1997.

The City of New York, Community Board 2, Borough of Brooklyn, *A Community Based Plan for the Old Brooklyn District. Including the Neighborhoods of Vinegar Hill, Bridge Plaza, DUMBO and Fulton Ferry*, Draft 197-A Plan, 1999.

³⁰ DUMBO Neighborhood Association, “About DNA,” (Brooklyn: DNA, n.d.), <http://www.dumbo-dna.org/aboutdna.asp> (accessed July 28, 2004).

³¹ DUMBO BID Steering Committee, “DUMBO BID District Plan,” (unpublished report, 2004), 3.

transformation of a neighborhood, considering the free press a way to gain visibility for the neighborhood.³² The name certainly added color to the story. They also leveraged the imagery of the name in other media, for example using images of elephants to promote the neighborhood on giant posters hung from the warehouses, visible to all the drivers on the Brooklyn Bridge.

In the year 2000 the neighborhood participated in a municipal program that was designed to attract new-media and digital businesses to select neighborhoods. DUMBO was one of nine neighborhoods in the outer boroughs selected to participate in the DigitalNYC initiative, which provided incentives to tenants choosing to locate in these neighborhoods, and provided the neighborhood with the opportunity to publicize its name on a city-wide platform. The neighborhood was adorned with banners on lampposts that publicized the program as well as the DUMBO name and the elephant image(see Fig. 5). DUMBO was further promoted in the DigitalNYC materials as “an emerging arts and cultural destination”³³ and part of the Downtown Brooklyn area.

DUMBO ultimately attracted almost 50% of all leases signed under the initiative (over 80 tenants).³⁴ These mostly small and medium-sized new-media and creative firms had been attracted to the location, types of spaces and cutting-edge image of the neighborhood. Once settled in the neighborhood, they contributed themselves to its image, which evolved to be “the premier location for African-American creatives [sic] and businesses,”³⁵ with tenants who are “cool and cutting edge,” and a high proportion (over 50 %) of female-owned and co-owned businesses.³⁶ Finally, DUMBO has increasingly attracted tenants involved in furniture manufacturing and interior design, playing host in 2004 to the much publicized “Brooklyn Designs” trade show and attracting high-profile interior design retailers.³⁷

³² Chris Havens, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

³³ New York City Economic Development Corporation. *Digital NYC – Wired to the World, Program Brochure*, (New York City, New York, 2000), 8.

³⁴ Jennifer Watler, Personal Interview, 3 June 2004.

³⁵ Chris Havens, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

³⁶ Chris Havens, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

³⁷ DUMBO BID Steering Committee, “DUMBO BID District Plan,” (unpublished report, 2004), 6.



Figure 5: DigitalNYC / DUMBO Lamppost Banner, October 2003

Whereas the name DUMBO had once evoked “the middle of nowhere, under the bridge, a little dark, a bit of a walk to the subway, with working artists next door,”³⁸ by 2003 it had shifted to more positive imagery which still incorporated the “artistic character, [that of] a changing area with old buildings, with spaces that are unique, large with great views and with Manhattan easily accessible.”³⁹

³⁸ Chris Havens, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

³⁹ Chris Havens, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

MEDIA USE OF THE DUMBO NAME

The DUMBO name was not on the radar for major news publications in the 1980s. For example, a 1987 article about a company relocating to one of the Gair buildings suggested that it was in a “shoreline district under the bridge” at Fulton Ferry, with no mention of DUMBO.⁴⁰ Most media referred to the area as Fulton Ferry, Fulton Landing, or some combination thereof.

The mid-1990s, however, saw the beginning of mentions of DUMBO in local newspapers – the Village Voice and the New York Times both referred to the neighborhood as such in 1995 and 1997, rather than using the Fulton Landing moniker that had been common up until that point.⁴¹ This ‘underground’ scene added to the buzz around the neighborhood, and awareness of DUMBO slowly began to grow by word of mouth. A 1997 study by the Van Alen Institute of the communities along the East River included the DUMBO/Fulton Ferry area, calling it “Between the Bridges,” but mentioned DUMBO in a more detailed discussion of the various uses within the larger district.⁴²

The 1998 book “The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn” includes DUMBO within a larger chapter on Downtown Brooklyn:

Near Vinegar Hill is the small neighborhood of DUMBO, the acronym for Down Under...As the area grows in size, character, and desirability, its boundaries are changing, and it is now sometimes called Between the Bridges. DUMBO is an up-and-coming neighborhood of artists and young people living in warehouses converted to apartments and studios.⁴³

The book also delineated the boundaries of DUMBO as such: Main Street on the west to Jay Street on the east, East River on the north to the BQE on the south.⁴⁴

By late 1997 and early 1998, DUMBO was used with increasing consistency throughout the press, both locally and internationally. Not coincidentally, this timing coincided with Two Tree’s successful re-zoning of their first building. Early on Two Trees recognized the value of the press in building up the area, remaining “very press-oriented” and offering the story of DUMBO as an “easy

⁴⁰ David W. Dunlap, “Fulton Ferry: Fabled Gymnasium Moves to Brooklyn,” *The New York Times*, 15 January 1987.

⁴¹ Lynda Richardson, “Amid Old Brooklyn Factories, A Shrinking Canvas,” *The New York Times*, 24 Jul 1995.

Amy Waldman, “Developer Woos Artists, Who Do Not Return the Favor,” *The New York Times*, 7 September 1997.

Lynn Yaeger, “Dumbo gumbo,” *The Village Voice*, 18 Nov 1997.

⁴² The Van Alen Institute East River Information Site, “Site Information: Between the Bridges,” (New York: The Van Alen Institute, 1997), http://www.vanalen.org/workshops/east_river/sites/stpg16.htm (accessed June 7, 2004).

⁴³ John B. Manbeck, ed. *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 97.

⁴⁴ John B. Manbeck, ed. *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 91.

color piece” on real estate.⁴⁵ For the developers, it was very important “to be open to the media, so people know things are happening.” One representative of the firm claims that even today, “most of what you read about DUMBO is because of press releases released by Two Trees.”⁴⁶

Most stakeholders in DUMBO will acknowledge immediately that the efforts of Two Trees and David Walentas in publicizing the neighborhood and the DUMBO name have been fundamental to the successful revitalization and growth of the neighborhood. Walentas was the most vocal, had the most at stake, has always made time for the press and selects tenants that will attract even more press, whether via their cultural events or their reputations as new ‘hot’ restaurants, bars or shops. Likewise, as the DUMBO name gained popularity, many of the retailers and commercial tenants benefited from being able to say that they were located in DUMBO.

GOVERNMENT ROLE IN NAMING

In the 1980s (several years after the name DUMBO had been coined), the DCP did not seem to be aware of DUMBO as a neighborhood, as could be surmised by its nonexistence in official documents filed with the city, which referred to the area as Fulton Ferry or Fulton Landing. A 1983 DCP map shows the entire area as Fulton Ferry, as do several Environmental Impact Statements from 1988, while a 1987 study of Downtown Brooklyn mentions a Fulton Landing project proposed for the area, but again, no mention of DUMBO.⁴⁷

The “Brooklyn Neighborhood Book” was published by The Fund for the Borough of Brooklyn in cooperation with the Brooklyn Borough President in 1985. This publication celebrated the neighborhoods of Brooklyn, including a discussion of *the buildings* between the bridges (as well as Fulton Landing) within the chapter on Brooklyn Heights, but does not identify the DUMBO or Fulton Landing areas as neighborhoods in their own right.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Chris Havens, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

⁴⁶ Issac Esterman, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

⁴⁷ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Fulton Ferry*, (New York: New York City Department of City Planning, February 1983), 14.

Liebman Melting Partnership, Proposed Residential Development at Block 208 and rezoning of Blocks 204 and 203 – Brooklyn, NY—Final EIS and Urban Design Impact Analysis, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, July 1988), 2.

Urbitran Associates, *Downtown Brooklyn Master Planning Improvement Study*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, January 1987), vii.

⁴⁸ Nanette Rainone, ed. *The Brooklyn Neighborhood Book*, (Brooklyn: The Fund for the Borough of Brooklyn, 1985), 18.

In a 1990 study of the area, the DCP continued to use the terms Fulton Ferry-Vinegar Hill in to refer to the area, and while a more detailed discussion of various sub-areas within Fulton Ferry-Vinegar Hill separated Fulton Ferry and Vinegar Hill from the rest of the study area they did not use the name DUMBO either – instead, the names “Gair-Sweeney” and “Manufacturing Core” are used to refer to what is today considered DUMBO.⁴⁹ The accompanying text emphasized that “the area between the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges contains a series of 10 large brick and concrete buildings known as the Gair-Sweeney complex.”⁵⁰ Again, no mention of DUMBO. Zoning and land use maps from the early 1990s also continue to use Fulton Landing and Fulton Ferry as the neighborhood names, again, with no reference to DUMBO.

In the zoning changes which affected a few blocks (and Two Trees properties) in the DUMBO area in 1997 and 1998, the zoning resolution uses the name “Fulton Ferry Landing Mixed Use District” for the Special Mixed Used District in that part of the city, however, accompanying text in the zoning resolution does mention DUMBO as one of the many “locations” in the city where such a district exists.

Only in 1999 did the DCP started to use the DUMBO name consistently to describe the area. While by 2004 the neighborhood name was not yet codified in zoning texts, the most recent Mayoral Strategic Plan specifically named DUMBO as one of the key areas that are targeted for re-zoning. A 2003 press release from the New York State Governor’s office mentions that “the historic district of Fulton Ferry, now known as DUMBO”⁵¹ is the site of a segment of the Brooklyn Bridge Park that was opened on the DUMBO waterfront in September of that year. Acknowledgement of the neighborhood by name by the Mayor’s office and the Stat Governor is tantamount to “official” acceptance, but I would argue that until the name is codified, the neighborhood’s definitive name has not yet been set.

OTHER FORMS OF “OFFICIALLY” DESIGNATING A NEIGHBORHOOD NAME

In addition to mention in zoning documents, the neighborhood name has been codified as a Historic District on the State and National level. Independently of the city, in 1998 the DNA

⁴⁹ Frank E. Chaney, *Fulton Ferry – Vinegar Hill*, Unpublished Report for the New York City Department of City Planning, (Brooklyn Borough Office, December 1990), fig.5.

⁵⁰ Frank E. Chaney, *Fulton Ferry – Vinegar Hill*, Unpublished Report for the New York City Department of City Planning, (Brooklyn Borough Office, December 1990), 11.

⁵¹ State of New York Executive Chamber Press Office, “Governor, Mayor Open Newest Section of Brooklyn Bridge Park,” (Press Release, 22 September 2003), <http://www.state.ny.us> (accessed July 28, 2004).

initiated the process to list DUMBO on the National Register of Historic Places. In September of 2000, an area of 24 blocks (approximately 48 acres) was entered into the National Register as the DUMBO Industrial District. The neighborhood was characterized in its entry as “a cohesive group of primarily late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century industrial and warehouse buildings”⁵² with “a strong industrial sense of place.”⁵³

While the entry on the National Register a valuable first step towards protection – and a significant step towards an “official” recognition of the neighborhood name – the DUMBO neighborhood is still not protected on the municipal level. Given that listing on the National Register “neither protects buildings nor a sense of place [and] comprehensive protection is only possible through becoming a locally designated historic district,”⁵⁴ the DNA has filed an application for city designation which has not yet been approved.

CURRENT STATUS

Two Trees acknowledges today that “the success of the last few years is largely because people are buying into a certain brand.” And while this is unusual for real estate, they also recognize that they have to preserve that imagery.⁵⁵ Since that first conversion, Two Trees and many other developers have continued to convert and construct new luxury loft buildings, office, retail and gallery spaces, strategically selecting retail and commercial tenants who could fuel the ‘hip’ image of the neighborhood.

Given the constant reference to the artist residents in much of the discussion of the neighborhood, it is clear that the tenant mix is vital to the construction of neighborhood image, and this is echoed by the Two Trees team. It remains a constant challenge to balance the sometimes opposing objectives of maintaining a community that remains welcoming for artists (which gives the neighborhood much of its cachet) while attracting the tenants who can afford the higher prices of luxury condominiums – young professionals and empty-nesters.

⁵² Dolkart, Andrew S. and the DUMBO Neighborhood Association, “DUMBO Industrial District,” *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998), 7-1.

⁵³ Dolkart, Andrew S. and the DUMBO Neighborhood Association, “DUMBO Industrial District,” *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998), 8-20.

⁵⁴ DUMBO Neighborhood Association, “About DNA,” (Brooklyn: DNA, n.d.), <http://www.dumbo-dna.org/aboutdna.asp> (accessed July 28, 2004).

⁵⁵ Issac Esterman, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

Two Trees have been particularly sensitive to the commercial and retail tenant base, recognizing that the commercial space “defines the character of the neighborhood [and] still cultivates the image of what’s there,” and that the “kind of tenants you have will drive your image.”⁵⁶

In early 2004 businesses and other stakeholders in the now “energetic artistic 24-hour community”⁵⁷ initiated the process to establish a DUMBO Business Improvement District (BID). With the BID’s primary objective being to “establish a more attractive, healthier neighborhood both in reality and perception,”⁵⁸ the steering committee suggests that “neighborhood marketing and promotion may be the most important of the staff’s functions....promoting the neighborhood as a good place to work and live.”⁵⁹ This initiative will also play a big role in facilitating the entrenchment of the DUMBO name.

Meanwhile, the DCP is in initial stages of the long (expected to pass at the end of 2005) process of conducting a comprehensive re-zoning of the area that will likely be called DUMBO. In the meantime, the planners in the Brooklyn Borough Office of the DCP responsible for the DUMBO neighborhood consistently use the name DUMBO when referring to the area and when producing any documents for the city planning commission.⁶⁰ This raises a subtlety of neighborhood naming – it would appear that a name does not have to be codified (such as in a zoning code) to have widespread acceptance, even by elected officials and government agencies (the disseminators of information in the Tools of Government framework). However, including the name in a zoning district certainly adds another layer of formality and official-ness to the name. That being said, in this case it would appear that the city government has played “catch-up” in terms of establishing the neighborhood’s name – the name clearly originated with the community and was promoted by developers and property owners.

Finally, given the consistent use of the DUMBO name by the DCP and the moves to re-zone the area, the fact that the neighborhood has not been accorded landmark status does not suggest that the city does not recognize the DUMBO neighborhood. However, representatives of the DNA suggest that the main reason for the unsuccessful attempt thus far of gaining municipal landmark

⁵⁶ Issac Esterman, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

⁵⁷ Two Trees Management, “Neighborhood Overview,” (Brooklyn: Two Trees Management, n.d.), <http://www.dumbo-newyork.com/neighborhood.cfm> (accessed November 13, 2004).

⁵⁸ DUMBO BID Steering Committee, “DUMBO BID District Plan,” (unpublished report, 2004), 12.

⁵⁹ DUMBO BID Steering Committee, “DUMBO BID District Plan,” (unpublished report, 2004), 15-16.

⁶⁰ Sarah Goldwyn, Personal Interview, 3 June 2004.

status for the neighborhood is due only to the “reluctance of the Landmarks commission to designate manufacturing districts as historic districts,”⁶¹ and not to the commission’s refusal to recognize the neighborhood name.

The DNA has acknowledged that a major motivating factor of this initiative is to protect the neighborhood from the expected “gold rush” when the DUMBO is finally re-zoned to allow for residential development.⁶² In this case, one could speculate that the City has hesitated to landmark the neighborhood for fear of limiting the development opportunities and sustained revitalization. However, conversations with the DCP indicate that they are exploring the option of gaining landmark status for the area, and have just not yet entered into discussions with the DNA.⁶³ Meanwhile, developers like Two Trees (who have clearly embraced the DUMBO name) are certainly opposed to any action that would limit their flexibility in terms of development going forward. Without a doubt, naming in this case is very closely tied to both image and protection of the neighborhood.

Perhaps the key in this case is to convince the landmark commission that DUMBO is no longer a manufacturing neighborhood, but now a residential neighborhood. With a change in zoning to allow residential uses, the DNA might not have such a difficult time convincing the Landmarks Commission to enter the district into the local register.

SUMMARY

The name DUMBO encompasses strong imagery, that of a vibrant neighborhood with a strong identity which has been embraced by the people who live there, who create the institutions that make it a neighborhood and those who have invested in the area. The name has given people something to identify with – it gives the neighborhood character and makes people want to live and work there. The name has also galvanized residents to feel as if they were part of a ‘place’, of a community that has a sense of civic pride and responsibility to participate in the neighborhood’s evolution.

Until recently, there was very little “there” there, and even though Two Trees and the city were confident that reinvestment would occur in the longer term, the buzz and interest generated by the name was a valuable jumpstart on the re-imaging of the neighborhood. The area certainly had a lot

⁶¹ Nancy Webster, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

⁶² Nancy Webster, Personal Interview, 2 June 2004.

⁶³ Sarah Goldwyn, Personal Interview, 3 June 2004.

of potential, to those who made it there. The physical characteristics of the neighborhood may have been compelling to many potential tenants once they set foot in the area. But the developers and the city recognized the need to create some kind of buzz to convince many people that the views of Manhattan, the easy commute, and loft-style apartments, were worth the gamble of moving to Brooklyn, to a neighborhood that for so long was under-served and only recently began to feature amenities expected in a residential neighborhood.

Notably, the city and the developers were reluctant to acknowledge the name for many years, and many thought (and still do) that is “stupid.” But efforts to redevelop the neighborhood without incorporating the DUMBO name did not succeed. Only once Two Trees embraced the existing community and identity of DUMBO did efforts to revitalize the neighborhood take hold, thanks in large part to the marketing of the DUMBO name and identity. While there is no direct evidence that one has to do anything with the other, I would argue that this turn of events certainly suggests that the name was instrumental in driving successful redevelopment.

The unusual name drew attention from the “early-adopters” and the groups of people who are “opinion leaders” – those who are often the pioneers and signal to the rest of the population what is worthwhile amid all the clutter. When the name DUMBO was not yet official in all circles, it was used consistently by Walentas and the others who had real estate interests in the area. The media also picked up on it and embraced the idea of DUMBO as a neighborhood, as did the business community and economic development officials who were seeking to capitalize on the buzz by creating a destination for shoppers, companies seeking space in a ‘hip’ area, and culture-seekers. There is no doubt that the neighborhood also benefited from the image as an “artist” neighborhood, building on the trend that is playing out in arts districts around the country.⁶⁴

This case demonstrates the idea of naming as a mechanism that works in concert with other tools (such as incentives for hi-tech business relocation, zoning or historic designation). While naming was clearly not a stand-alone tool in the redevelopment of DUMBO, its ability to generate interest and encourage people to consider the area in a different light was paramount, and in many ways set the stage for further efforts.

⁶⁴ Jason Schupbach, *Artists Downtown: Capitalizing on Arts Districts in New England*, MCP Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, 2003.

IV. Case Study: Hudson Yards, Manhattan

In 2002, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration and the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) introduced the *Hudson Yards Plan* to redevelop the entire area between 28th and 43rd Streets, west of Seventh and Eighth Avenues in New York City (fig.6). Until then, the area had been referred to as Far West Midtown, Hell's Kitchen South, the Convention Center District, and the far West Side, among other names. But with the introduction of this plan officials have suggested that with redevelopment the area can reinvent itself as a place called "Hudson Yards."

The plan encompasses rail yards at 30th Street and Eleventh Avenue but extends to include many blocks to the north, east and south. In the past the area had been home to a vibrant residential community bustling with commercial, industrial and manufacturing uses, but by the time the plan was introduced the city had determined that the area was abandoned but with great potential for revitalization,:

...this area is today isolated from public transportation, has scarce open space, and is dominated by the pit of the rail yards, parking lots, and auto body shops. Adjacent to some of the world's most valuable real estate, this district – once transformed – is the only location in Manhattan capable of housing the large floor plate office buildings that employ our citizens and fuel our economy and City.¹

The City's view, however, is not necessarily an accurate representation of what actually exists on the ground. The area has long been the site of multiple neighborhood identities, mixed uses and residential communities. It is not considered one coherent neighborhood – the area delineated by the proposed boundaries of the Hudson Yards district contains several different neighborhoods that had little relation to one another, which suggests that the name Hudson Yards will not be adopted in the vernacular as readily as its proponents might hope.

In May 2004 the DCP published a revised plan that reflected the concerns of the existing communities. In response to the demands of the local communities, the new plan (fig.7) for the Special Hudson Yards District include several sub-districts, including "Hell's Kitchen", the "Farley Corridor", and the "34th Street Corridor," names that recall nomenclature that is still in use by various stakeholders today.

¹ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, "City Planning Certifies Hudson Yards Plan Beginning Public Review of West Side Redevelopment as Economic Engine for NYC." Press Release, 21 June 2004.

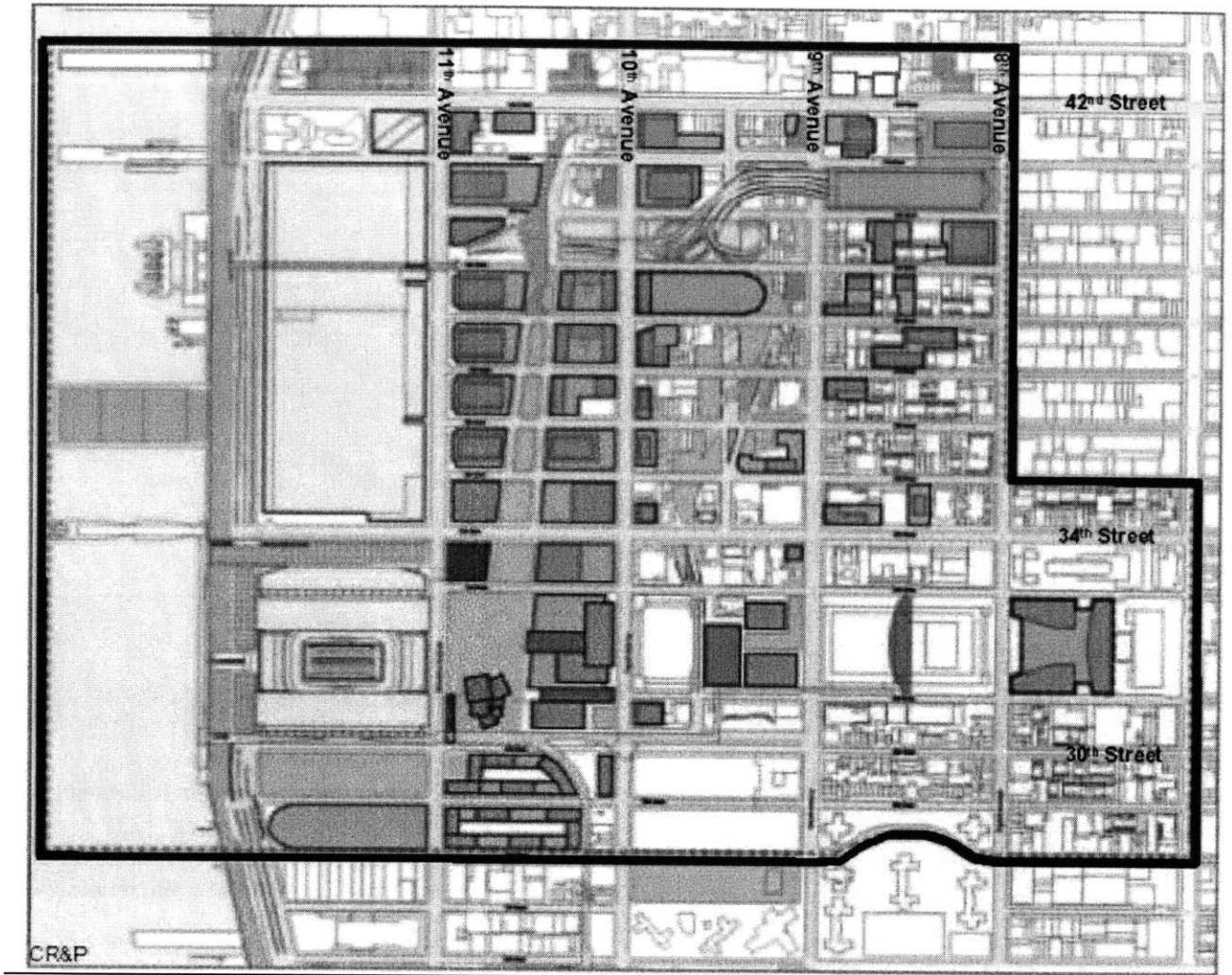


Figure 6: Hudson Yards Preferred Direction, 2003²

²The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Master Plan Preferred Direction*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2003), 18.

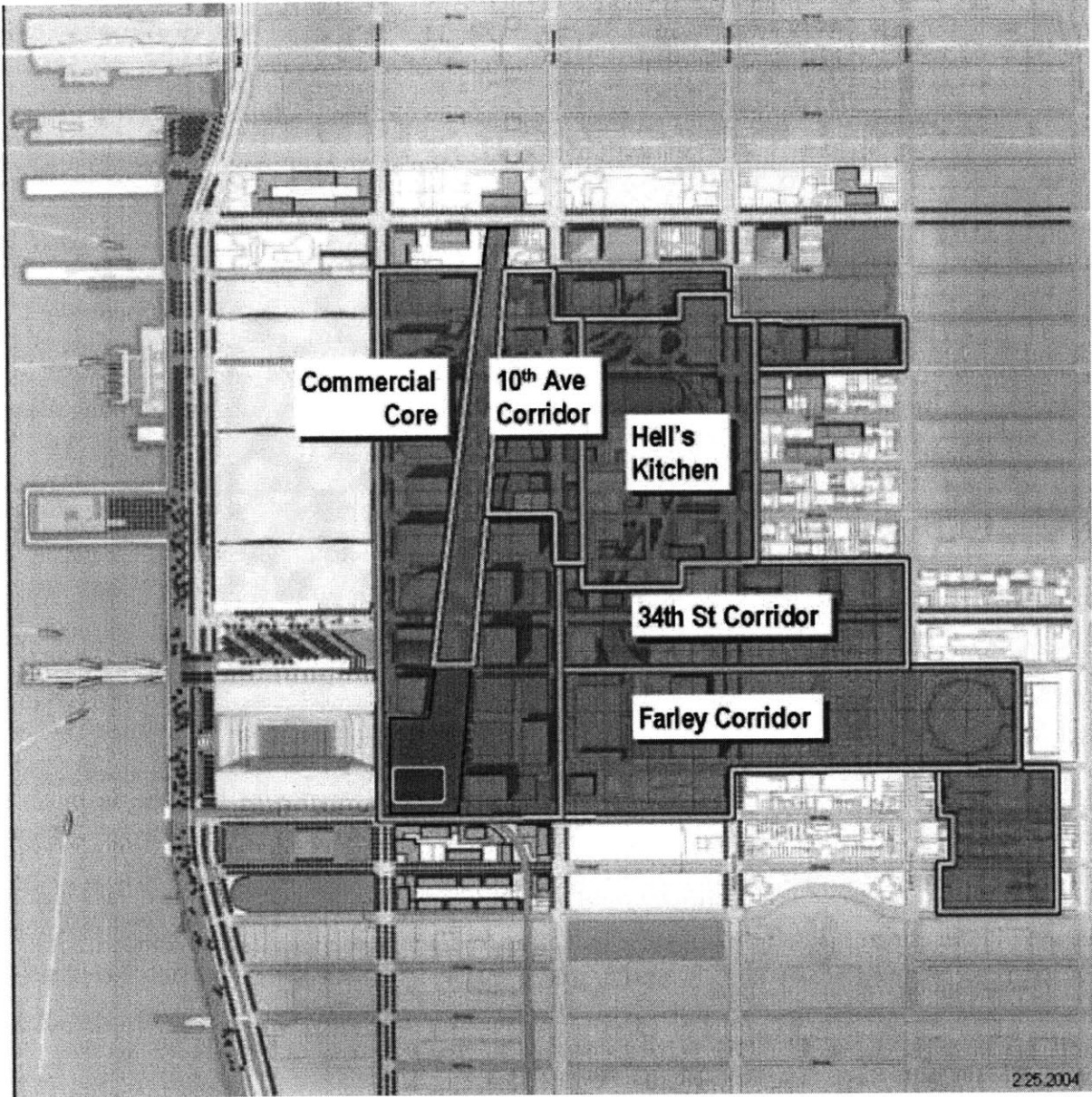


Figure 7: Proposed Special Hudson Yards District, 2004³

³ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Zoning Presentation*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2004), 41.

HISTORY

In the 1700s and until the mid-1800s, the farmland north of 30th Street on the West Side was known as Bloomingdale owned primarily by the Clinton family. In 1847, railroad tracks that would “shape the character of the neighborhood from then on”⁴ were laid out on the farmland, running down what is today Eleventh Avenue to a depot on 30th Street. The arrival of the railroad prompted the establishment of freight yards, repair shops, support services and passenger stations for competing railroads throughout the area, all the way down to 24th and up to 39th Streets between Tenth and Twelfth Avenues.⁵ The railroads attracted manufacturing firms, shipping firms, and heavy industry – soon lumberyards, glue factories, gas works and slaughterhouses were among those businesses that had established themselves in the area. These industries were accompanied by tenement housing for the unskilled immigrant laborers who worked there, concentrated along Ninth and Tenth Avenues between 24th and 39th Streets. The tenements were known to be “dramatically squalid, lawless, overrun with street gangs, and unhealthy.”⁶

Adding to the already bleak landscape was the arrival of the “el” in the late 1800s, the elevated railroad which ran above Ninth Avenue. “The shadows and the noise and dirt of the el...served to reinforce the low-income and industrial character of this part of the West Side,”⁷ and soon it became known one of the most notorious criminal enclaves in town,⁸ garnering the title “the most dangerous area on the American continent.”⁹ This powerful imagery generated by the combination of noxious industry, slaughterhouses, poor immigrant housing, notorious gangs, and general squalor was captured perfectly in the colorful moniker that came to describe the area, Hell’s Kitchen.¹⁰

⁴ Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc., *Final EIS for Ninth Avenue and 31st Street*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, December 1989), II B-2.

⁵ Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc., *Final EIS for Ninth Avenue and 31st Street*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, December 1989), II B-2.

⁶ Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., *Draft EIS – Office Tower at Ninth and 33rd*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, October 1989), III 2.1-3.

⁷ Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., *Draft EIS – Office Tower at Ninth and 33rd*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, October 1989), III, 4-2.

⁸ George Spiegler and Mary Clark, *Hell’s Kitchen History*, (The Public Press, 1996), <http://www.midtownmedia.com/chronicle/HKhistory.htm> (accessed May 26, 2004).

⁹ Attributed to the writer Herbert Asbury. “Talking about New York,” *AM New York*, 20 November 2003.

¹⁰ Eleventh Avenue around this time had also acquired the name “Death Avenue” owing to the fact that the railroad tracks that ran primarily at grade north of 33rd street, through residential neighborhoods where it was not unusual for a child or an adult to be killed by a passing train – hence, the morbid name.

Lee E. Cooper, “New Era in Sight for Eleventh Avenue,” *The New York Times*, 10 December 1939.

The name Hell's Kitchen is purported to have several origins¹¹, referring first and foremost to a rough section on the South Side of London. How it came to refer to an area of New York City is unclear, however several compelling accounts exist. One of the more popular stories tells of a summer exchange between two policemen watching a street fight one sweltering night, "observing a small riot on that block and saying, 'The place is hell itself.' The retort, from 'Dutch Fred the Cop' was 'Hell's a mild climate. This is hell's kitchen.'"¹² Another theory traces the name to a local restaurant named Heil's Kitchen, after its owners.¹³ Yet others claim that it originally "referred to a saloon on the Lower East Side, but was applied to a gang formed in 1868 which ruled this neighborhood."¹⁴ The gang specialized in raids on the 30th Street Yards of the Hudson River Railroad,

¹¹ The name Hell's Kitchen actually first applied to a dive near Corlear's Rock on the city's lower east side north of Grand Street and only later to the West 39th Street building. But, from there, newspapers tagged the name to most of the neighborhood with emphasis on the West 40's blocks. Though the Hell's Kitchen building name is the most credible explanation of the label, a variety of others circulate. All place the original area around 39th Street and are fairly similar.

One tale claims that in the 1880's the proprietor of a restaurant on 39th Street close to Eleventh Avenue catered to New Jersey cattle and sheep men delivering stock. Neighborhood youths so regularly engaged them in brawls that the police began to refer to calls about them as "hell in the kitchen" with the locale soon becoming known as Hell's Kitchen. A variation of this tale claims the proprietor's name to be Heil, his restaurant Heil's Kitchen which elided into the now familiar name.

Another anecdote places the origin of the name on the western side of Eleventh Avenue where, high on rock, a squatter made his home. Children in the neighborhood frightened themselves on dark nights by venturing close to watch him cook before an open fire with his flowing hair and long white beard shining eerily in the flickering light. The children would run home thrilled to tell their friends they'd been at the door of "Hell's Kitchen."

Application of the name also may lie in a particular gang's notoriety. Through the 1870's and '80's hordes of youth gangs dominated many areas of the city. The Battle Row Gang in the east 60's held sway from the east side of town to the Hudson River; the Gophers ruled the west side from 14th to 42nd Street, Seventh to Eleventh Avenues. A score of smaller gangs operated under the Gophers. The labels of these "500 thugs" included Gorillas, Rhodas Gang and Parlor Mob. In 1868, some of their members who hung out in a saloon on 39th Street's "Battle Row" between Tenth and Eleventh Avenue took one building's colorful name as their own to form the Hell's Kitchen Gang, "a collection of the most desperate ruffians in the city."

Although subsurface crime undoubtedly continues today, the "notorious" Hell's Kitchen era lasted little more than a score of years. The 1881 newspaper application first evidences it as a section. Social historian Jacob Riis, in his 1902 volume "The Battle with the Slum," already regrets its loss with, "Hell's Kitchen in its ancient wickedness was picturesque, at least, with its rocks and its goats and shanties.

Mary Brendle, *Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and its Women*, (New York: Thanks Be To Grandmother Winifred Foundation, 1997). <http://hellskitchen.net/resource/history/brendle/> (accessed May 17 2004).

¹² Henry J. Browne, *One Stop Above Hell's Kitchen*, (Centennial for Sacred Heart Church, New York: Custombook, 1977).

¹³ George Spiegler, *Clinton Chronicle*, n.d. <http://www.hellskitchennyc.com/html/name.htm> (accessed August 10, 2004).

¹⁴ "To be sure, the neighborhood has had its bad guys. "Through the 1870's, the Gophers gang ruled the whole West Side," Ms. Brendle said. "They stole from the railroad cars, the docks." And there was an 1880's spinoff of the Gophers, the Hell's Kitchen Gang, which that same Times article cited as the city's "most desperate ruffians." (As late as the 1980's, the neighborhood was plagued by a murderous gang, the Westies, linked to the Gambino crime family.)"

Dennis Hevesi, "In Hell's Kitchen, a Changing Skyline," *The New York Times*, 12 May 2002.

but also engaged in extortion, robbery, and other criminal activities,”¹⁵ becoming known as the “Hell's Kitchen Gang...the city's most desperate ruffians.”¹⁶

Regardless of its origins, the name resonated with everyone including residents, visitors, city officials, and the press. The first printed use of the term is found in a *New York Times* report dated September 22, 1881, about a particularly squalid tenement at 39th Street and Tenth Avenue which is called “Hell's Kitchen” by the local policeman. The article describes:

a collection of buildings of the same unprepossessing appearance known to the police as ‘Hell's Kitchen,’...the lowest and filthiest in the city... [filled with] horde of vagrants, petty thieves and utterly depraved prostitutes.¹⁷

From this first reference to a specific building, the name Hell's Kitchen ultimately grew to encompass many surrounding streets, eventually referring to an area that extended roughly from 30th Street to 59th Street and from Eighth Avenue to the Hudson River.¹⁸ The boundaries were never formally set, nor have I been able to find any evidence of the name being codified by the municipal government, however it appears from all accounts that the name was fairly well entrenched.

SOUTHERN HELL'S KITCHEN: PHYSICAL BIFURCATION AND ISOLATION

In the early 1900s and 40 years into the life of Hell's Kitchen, the New York Central Railroad built a tunnel from New Jersey under the Hudson River that surfaced between 31st and 33rd Streets to meet up with the existing railroad infrastructure on the West Side. This project was the beginning of many incursions into the neighborhood that would result in a fragmented identity by the end of the century. It was also the first of several major public works projects in the neighborhood that had the effect of isolating the area from the remainder of Hell's Kitchen, as well as separating portions of the larger neighborhood.

Many of the row houses that had been in the path of the railroad were demolished to make way for the tracks as well as the new Pennsylvania Station and the General Post Office (also known as

¹⁵ Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc. and Vollmer Associates, *The Old Madison Square Garden Site Final Environmental Impact Statement*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, May 1986).

¹⁶ Dennis Hevesi, “In Hell's Kitchen, a Changing Skyline,” *The New York Times*, 12 May 2002.

¹⁷ Bruce Lambert, “Neighborhood Report: Chelsea/Clinton; Hell's Kitchen Hotter With Revivalist Fans,” *The New York Times*, 4 December 1994.

¹⁸ ExploreNYC, “Hell's Kitchen Location,” *The Heart of Hell's Kitchen Walking Tour*, (New York: ExploreNYC, 2000) <http://www.explorenyc.com/Hell's%20Kitchen/manhat.html> (accessed May 24, 2004).

the Farley Post Office). These two buildings were built partly over the railroad tracks between Seventh and Ninth Avenues, but only the Farley Post Office remains today.

The government-initiated depression-era West Side Improvement Program continued to demolish large tracts of tenement housing in the Hudson Yards area through the first half of the century. Projects included the construction of the West Side Highway, of the access ramps to the Lincoln Tunnel, and the sinking of the at-grade rail lines on Eleventh Avenue to a depressed mid-block right-of way (that remained largely uncovered but for several bridge crossings) between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues.¹⁹ The Port Authority Bus Terminal, built in the 1950s between Eighth and Ninth Avenues and 40th and 42nd Streets continued the trend of infrastructure projects, taking up more land and displacing more of the residential and commercial spaces in the area.

In addition to decimating much of the residential population and commercial vitality of the neighborhood, these structures served to separate the area below 42nd street from the Midtown, Times Square and Herald Square areas and their core activities as well as from the northern half of Hell's Kitchen. The decision to build in this area was a clear denial of the existing neighborhood and uses, and an indication that the community lacked the political legitimacy to oppose such government initiatives.

A sliver of Hell's Kitchen's past prosperity remained centered on Ninth Avenue between 35th and 39th Streets, but otherwise the area's new identity and function was that of a transportation hub, dominated by shipping and warehousing activities. Most people would refer to the major structures in the neighborhood such as the Port Authority, Penn Station, and Madison Square Garden when describing the area.

Many of the remaining residents below 42nd street continued to consider themselves part of the neighborhood north of 42nd Street. The history and identity conjured by the name Hell's Kitchen applied to both sides of 42nd Street, reflected in a distinctive urban form of human-scale, low-rise streets predominated by sturdy tenements, interspersed with brownstones, churches, schools, community gardens, and thriving businesses.²⁰ As such, the Hell's Kitchen name remained in use for the Ninth Avenue area, but the other areas lacked the strong communities around which to build an identity.

¹⁹ Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc., *Draft EIS – Office Tower at Ninth and 33rd*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, October 1989), III 4-3.

²⁰ExploreNYC, "Hell's Kitchen Location," *The Heart of Hell's Kitchen Walking Tour*, (New York: ExploreNYC, 2000) <http://www.explorenyc.com/Hell's%20Kitchen/manhat.html> (accessed May 24, 2004).

Through the 1950s and 60s, what was left of Hell's Kitchen remained a convenient and affordable residential annex to Times Square and Broadway, populated by immigrant and working-class employees of the area's many shops, hotels, restaurants, offices and theaters. While the grip of the gangs was no longer what it had been at the turn of the century,²¹ the area remained dangerous and retained its "gritty" and "rough and tumble" character. This imagery was made only more severe by the industrial character of the transportation developments in the area and the tenements that did remain. In this environment, the residents of Hell's Kitchen maintained a strong sense of community and remained proud of their close-knit, working-class district that many considered to be "unmatched in the city" in its diversity.²²

CLINTON

Despite this community pride, a name as colorful as Hell's Kitchen certainly had its detractors. Those who were critical of the name and frustrated by the negative associations gained ground in 1959 after two children were killed in gang violence in the area. Galvanized by this event, a group of residents rallied to improve the area's image, "renaming the neighborhood in an effort to spiff up its reputation"²³ choosing to re-name the area Clinton.²⁴ This more 'genteel' name referred to the family which had owned the farmland that became the West Side, the family of George Clinton, New York's first Governor, and his nephew DeWitt Clinton, who served as Mayor and Governor in the 19th century.²⁵

But the Clinton name was not universally accepted. The area had been known for so long as Hell's Kitchen and associated with an industrial working-class and 'gritty' imagery that to some,

²¹ Gangster rule of hell's kitchen continued until 1910, when the railroad organized a special police force to counter the gangsters to loosen the control they once had over the neighborhood.

Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc. and Vollmer Associates, *The Old Madison Square Garden Site Final Environmental Impact Statement*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, May 1986).

²² Peter Keepnews, "Manhattan's West Side: Article VI: Clinton," *The New York Post*, 14 December 1974.

²³ Sanna Feirstein, *Naming New York: Manhattan Places & How They Got Their Names* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 124.

²⁴ Several buildings in the Hell's Kitchen area already had the Clinton name on them, and records tell of an 1839 Clinton horse-car route, as well as DeWitt Clinton Park and DeWitt Clinton High School which both opened in 1903.

Mary Brendle, *Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and its Women*, (New York: Thanks Be To Grandmother Winifred Foundation, 1997). <http://hellskitchen.net/resource/history/brendle/> (accessed May 17 2004).

Joyce Cohen, "If You're Thinking of Living In...Clinton; Gritty Gives Way to Gentrification," *The New York Times*, 7 May 2000.

²⁵ Dennis Hevesi, "In Hell's Kitchen, a Changing Skyline," *The New York Times*, 12 May 2002.

replacing Hell's Kitchen with Clinton was considered a denial of their own identity. As one resident had put it:

Clinton may sound better, but I could never deny my roots. Hell's Kitchen was a place to survive...and for those that did, that raised families and contributed to the positive changes and community, adopting a generic name like Clinton is seen as "whitewashing the experience."²⁶

Some suggested that the name change was related to a desire to distinguish the community from certain class or ethnic connotations: "The lace-curtain Irish really didn't want to say Hell's Kitchen, and you had the uptown nouveaux who moved in, and everybody started pushing that Clinton name."²⁷

Despite the divided opinions and reactions to the new name, "Clinton" was embraced by the real estate community as well as the City, ultimately becoming the name of the special zoning district formed in 1973 to protect the 'village' character of the neighborhood from the encroaching development from midtown. City maps and official documents employed the name Clinton, but sometimes referred to the 'popular' or 'former' name of Hell's Kitchen as a point of reference.

However, one significant feature of the Special Clinton District re-zoning would influence the future of Hudson Yards, and involved the boundaries delineated by the City. While the Hell's Kitchen name had traditionally referred to 30th Street up to 59th Street, the Special Clinton District delineated by the City would run only from 41st to 59th Streets (between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River).²⁸ The codification of Clinton thus excluded the part of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen below 42nd street, perhaps a subtle hint that the area was not considered part of Hell's Kitchen anymore.

²⁶ Kelly Crow, "Neighborhood Report: Clinton; If You Can't Stand the Name, Get Out of Hell's Kitchen," *The New York Times*, 21 April 2002.

²⁷ Bruce Lambert, "Neighborhood Report: Chelsea/Clinton; Hell's Kitchen Hotter With Revivalist Fans," *The New York Times*, 4 December 1994.

²⁸ The zoning in the district, among the most restrictive and protective of the existing scale of development ever enacted, limits midblock buildings from rising higher than seven stories or 66 feet, whichever was less. Corner buildings would be permitted to climb as high as the underlying zoning allowed.

Dennis Hevesi, "In Hell's Kitchen, a Changing Skyline," *The New York Times*, 12 May 2002.

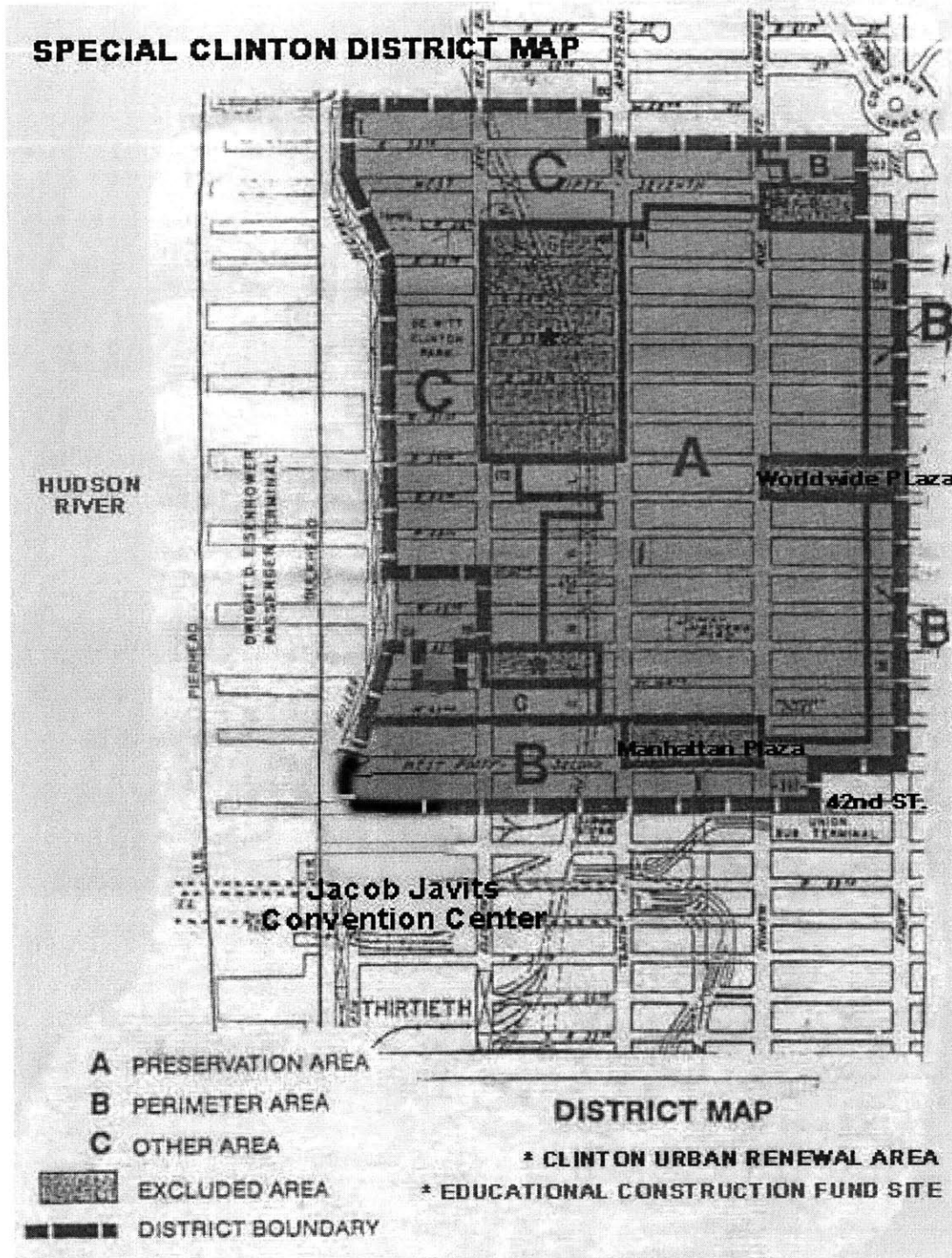


Figure 8: Zoning Map of the Special Clinton District²⁹

²⁹ New York City Department of City Planning, 1973.

On the ground, there was little distinction in the character of the neighborhood in the ‘official’ Clinton district and the southern part of Hell’s Kitchen – both had “a curious ethnic mix of Italians, Irish, Greeks, Hispanics, Serbo-Croatians, Germans and Blacks...the best food shopping district in the city, specializing in international exotic food for gourmets.”³⁰ In the popular press, the name Clinton would be associated with the streets below the official Special Clinton District in some contexts, but often mentioned in conjunction with or in relation to Hell’s Kitchen. For example, articles would refer to the area as “...Clinton, better known as Hell’s Kitchen.”³¹ But this administrative decision would have an impact on the neighborhood south of 42nd Street going forward.

Finally, aside from the part of Ninth Avenue between 35th and 42nd Streets that retained the identity of Hell’s Kitchen, few of the characteristics associated with Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen pertained to the other parts of what is today the proposed Hudson Yards district. The rail yards area, the on-ramps to the Lincoln Tunnel, Penn Station and all of the vacant lots and warehouses west of Tenth Avenue had been separate from the community since the earlier periods of infrastructure development, had no unifying identity, and remained relatively anonymous and under-developed. The area had gone into decline in the 1960s, due largely to the advent of sex shops in Times Square which led to an overflow of prostitution and drugs in the area.³² By the 1970s and 1980s, the area was considered one of “abandoned railroad tracks, decaying warehouses and junkyards...which in cleanliness and attractiveness suggest the back alleys of Bombay...full of drug addicts and hookers.”³³ While the name Hell’s Kitchen seemed to still fit in concept, the character of those areas was no longer congruent with the rest of the “real” Hell’s Kitchen.

THE JAVITS CONVENTION CENTER – CATALYST FOR REVITALIZATION?

In the 1970s the state and city began to develop plans for the Jacob Javits Convention Center, to be located on the West Side waterfront. The Convention Center had initially been proposed for a site in the mid-40s, but in response to community opposition the final proposal shifted to a site below 42nd Street.

³⁰ Doug Garr and Steve Simon, “Clinton vs. Martin Lublin – One of the Last Great Manhattan Neighborhoods is Under Attack,” *The Village Voice*, 18 August 1975.

³¹ Carol Polsky, “A Home on the Block,” *NY Newsday*, 14 January 1986.

³² George Spiegler and Mary Clark, *Hell’s Kitchen History*, (The Public Press, 1996), <http://www.midtownmedia.com/chronicle/HKhistory.htm> (accessed May 26 2004).

³³ Richard D. Lyons. “Glittering Javits Center Kindles Dreams for West Side” in *The New York Times*, April 6 1986.

The final EIS for the project illustrates the stance of the city with regards to the surrounding neighborhood, stating that “the Clinton neighborhood begins north of West 42nd Street,”³⁴ which implied that the part of Hell’s Kitchen below 42nd Street was not part of Clinton. In fact, in the City’s perspective, the site proposed for the Convention Center was characterized by the fact that:

...community forces which normally define and bind a neighborhood such as parks, recreational & cultural facilities, community centers, local shopping and entertainment districts do not exist or are severely lacking. Community identity is deficient.³⁵

Ultimately the area between 34th and 39th Streets and Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues was designated and re-zoned by the city as the “Convention Center District.”³⁶ This name was a generic name, referring to what the City clearly expected to be a catalyst for revitalization of the area. The name reflected the vision the City had for the neighborhood, one that included developments to complement the convention center with hotels and restaurants – with The Convention Center District name there could be little doubt what their preferred land uses and the accompanying neighborhood identity would be. The name did not demonstrate any of the features that Aaker suggests contribute to memorability and a good brand name.

Perhaps the City expected that this term would not actually turn into a neighborhood name in and of itself and would only remain a descriptive name for use by city officials when describing the area, based on the dominant feature of the landscape at the time. As additional developments were completed, they would contribute to the neighborhood’s identity and might inspire a new name. Madison Square Garden was considering relocating to the rail yards at 30th street between Eleventh and Twelfth, NBC studios was looking to set up “television city” studios immediately north of the Javits Center; several other proposals were in the pipeline for parking facilities, commercial office towers and hotels.³⁷ All of these projects could have had an impact on the area and its name.

³⁴ Vollmer Associates and Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc., *Final EIS for the Proposed Special Convention Center District and Convention and Hotel Development*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, December 15 1989), 3-7.

³⁵ Vollmer Associates and Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc., *Final EIS for the Proposed Special Convention Center District and Convention and Hotel Development*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, December 15 1989), 1-3.

³⁶ In fact, it was the prospect of the Convention Center in the 40’s that had prompted the creation of the Special Clinton District in the first place – residents and community activists had feared that the Center would spur speculation and increased property values in the adjacent areas and result in the destruction of low-scale neighborhoods in favor of high-density commercial development to leverage the proximity of the convention center.

³⁷ Carter B. Horsley, “MTA Plans West Side Mini-City,” *The New York Post*, 23 October 1989.

The expectation of new development opportunities linked to the Convention Center also led to speculation, with many people buying up the empty lots and vacant buildings in the area. While development proposals for the area would call the neighborhood "...the convention center neighborhood,"³⁸ they would also suggest names of their own, such as "Riverwalk" and "Chelsea Walk," that might be expected to evoke a sense of place for the imagined residents and tenants. Proposals from other parts of the government were equally creative in their naming suggestions for what might be built in the Convention Center District. In 1987, the Public Development Corporation proposed a \$630m mixed-use project called "Hudson River Center", which would be built on a platform stretching from 35th to 40th streets, west of Twelfth Avenue (in the Hudson River).³⁹ The inclusion of such names in the proposals indicates that the Department of City Planning was likely not looking to institutionalize the Convention Center District name.

Despite the rampant speculation and the economic boom anticipated by its opening, by the time the Javits Center was finally completed in 1986 few of the related developments in the surrounding area had come to fruition, leaving the area filled mostly with vacant lots and empty warehouses.⁴⁰

REVIVAL OF HELL'S KITCHEN – HELL'S KITCHEN SOUTH

The early 1990s saw an influx of newcomers to the neighborhood despite its still rough-around-the-edges nature. They were drawn to the area by affordable rents, a diverse residential character, a reputation for specialty food shops, and the "unique experience of living in converted houses and

³⁸ Vollmer Associates and Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc., *Final EIS for the Proposed Special Convention Center District and Convention and Hotel Development*, (New York City Department of City Planning, Environmental Review Division, December 15 1989), 1-3.

³⁹ "City plans \$630m Hudson project," *The New York Press*, 11 February 1987.

⁴⁰ Few were willing to actually invest in what was a poorly-served neighborhood in terms of parking and transportation and still considered "a disgrace to the city." This pattern of landholding but little investment did little to improve the area.

Any desire to engage in development in the area was stymied by unfavorable zoning. The underlying zoning remained limited to manufacturing uses and prohibited re-development at a level that would make anything financially feasible. Apartments in the area remained rent stabilized, which resulted in very low rents to the landlords and few economic incentives to renovate many of the old, dilapidated apartments – those that were cited for violations were left vacant by landlords not willing to invest in renovations. At the same time, those apartments that had stood vacant for over two years were no longer eligible to be rented out as residential properties, under the manufacturing zoning of the neighborhood, leading many properties to remain vacant and unimproved.

Richard D. Lyons. "Glittering Javits Center Kindles Dreams for West Side" in *The New York Times*, April 6 1986.

tenements.”⁴¹ This manifested itself in how people also chose to refer to the neighborhood, what name they used – Clinton or Hell’s Kitchen. One journalist observed, “many longtime neighbors and newcomers refuse to use [Clinton]. In an era of low crime and sprouting high-rises, they are wistfully proud of Hell’s Kitchen and its bloody past.”⁴² The radical declines in crime and increased safety and cleanliness of New York City minimized the risks that had once been associated with neighborhoods such as Hell’s Kitchen, but the gentrification that had occurred in other parts of the city had yet to implicate itself fully in the neighborhood. It remained one of the last “old-guard” neighborhoods where lower-income people could still afford to live in Manhattan.

In 1994 residents from the section of Hell’s Kitchen below 42nd Street (primarily along Ninth Avenue) founded the Hell’s Kitchen Neighborhood Association (HKNA). A bar and a newspaper appropriated the Hell’s Kitchen name soon after, considering the Clinton name a “relatively newfangled creation [which] sounded a bit too bland for a neighborhood with such an earthy past.”⁴³

These new residents and organizations are popularly credited with reviving the Hell’s Kitchen name. They appreciated the nostalgic elements of the name and the salty history of the area as a key part of its identity, one that resonated with people outside the community as well. The appeal was captured by one community member who observed that that “a lot of new people love to write home and tell they’re living in Hell’s Kitchen – then their mothers write back all upset.”⁴⁴

To distinguish themselves from the part of Hell’s Kitchen that had become part of the Special Clinton District, residents and neighborhood groups began adding “South” to the neighborhood’s name. Furthering the distinct identity of Hell’s Kitchen South, in 1994 the city gave an “official” nod to the area, approving a zoning change for Ninth Avenue between 41st and 35th Streets to allow residential and commercial uses (rather than manufacturing only). While this was not an explicit move to ‘name’ the neighborhood (the zoning designation was M-5, rather than a Special District like Clinton), it was a clear indication from the City that those blocks constituted a distinct neighborhood that had a different identity from the rest of the area. This acknowledgement would come into play again when it came time to designate the Hudson Yards neighborhood.

⁴¹ Chris Erikson, “Cleaning Up the Kitchen,” *Manhattan Spirit*, 14 April 1995.

⁴² Kelly Crow, “Neighborhood Report: Clinton; If You Can’t Stand the Name, Get Out of Hell’s Kitchen,” *The New York Times*, 21 April 2002.

⁴³ Bruce Lambert, “Neighborhood Report: Chelsea/Clinton; Hell’s Kitchen Hotter With Revivalist Fans,” *The New York Times*, 4 December 1994.

⁴⁴ Bruce Lambert, “Neighborhood Report: Chelsea/Clinton; Hell’s Kitchen Hotter With Revivalist Fans,” *The New York Times*, 4 December 1994.

The name Hell's Kitchen South continued to be used through the late 1990s by the popular press as well as by residents. In 1998 the HKNA co-sponsored a study with the Design Trust for Public Space named "Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies" which became the basis for a 197-a plan submitted to the Community Board in 2000. The study and 197-a plan allowed the HKNA to formally introduce their vision for their neighborhood, to steer growth and development so that it would be beneficial to the Hell's Kitchen South neighborhood.⁴⁵

This proliferation of activity around the Hell's Kitchen name contributed to its revival as well as to a sense of community in the area that had been dormant (if not beaten down) over years of disinvestment. Despite this revival city planning documents continued to ignore the Hell's Kitchen name. Reports would instead use generic designations such as "far west Midtown" or refer to the area as the "southern portion of Clinton."⁴⁶

Given that Hell's Kitchen referred more specifically to the Ninth Avenue portion of the Hudson Yards area, it is conceivable that the reluctance to use the Hell's Kitchen name to refer to the entire area. It was clear that a coherent identity for the entire area encompassed by Hudson Yards did not exist. Occasionally nicknames like TunJav (the Lincoln Tunnel to the Javits Center), WOPA (West of the Port Authority) and NOPA (North of the Port Authority) would emerge, but these only enjoyed usage in the narrowest of circles.⁴⁷ The area was more accurately a collection of fragments and edges of other neighborhoods – it did not have a single identity or name.

RE-IMAGING THE AREA

In 1999, an international ideas competition sponsored by the International Foundation for the Canadian Center for Architecture was centered on the area between 30th and 34th Streets from Eighth Avenue to the River. The main objective was "to generate new thinking" about the area which the sponsors considered to be Hell's Kitchen South.⁴⁸ The competition was endorsed by the

⁴⁵ Michael Conrad and David Smiley, *Hell's Kitchen South – Developing Strategies*, (New York: Design Trust for Public Space, 2002), 91.

⁴⁶ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, "Far West Midtown: A Framework for Development," (New York City Department of City Planning, Winter 2001, NYC DCP #01-21), 1.

⁴⁷ Glenn Collins, "Can Stand the Heat? You'll Like It Here; As Hell's Kitchen's Appeal Rises, Old-Timers Battle Stadium Plan," *The New York Times*, 13 December 2000.

⁴⁸ "At Grand Central, Theoretical Designs for Area Between Penn Station and the Hudson," *The New York Times*, 3 October 1999.

CCA, "Competition Site," *CCA Competition/Description and Conditions*, 13 November 1999, http://www.cca.qc.ca/prize/e/descriptions/desc3_1.htm (accessed 4 August 2004).

City and despite being only an ideas competition; it did draw attention to the area and to the City's efforts to catalyze investment there, but none of the proposals included a name for the neighborhoods they were to create.⁴⁹

At the same time that the HKNA was putting together their 197-a plan NYC 2012, a non-profit corporation leading the City's bid for the 2012 Summer Olympics released a plan that proposed transforming the entire area west of Ninth Avenue and between 29th and 42nd Streets. The plan proposed calling the area, which included Hell's Kitchen South, "Hudson Yards".

One of the key sites needed for the Olympic Bid was a stadium and the land in far West Midtown, including the open MTA/Long Island Rail Road Caemmerer Rail Yards at 30th Street, was considered the ideal location for such a project. This proposal echoed the concept that Mayor Giuliani had promoted since 1995, which proposed locating a stadium above the rail yards to house the New York Jets NFL team, funded with the proceeds from office developments in adjacent blocks. However this was the first time that a name was suggested for the entire neighborhood, rather than simply referring to the area as the far West Side.

They had chosen the name Hudson Yards "because it [the development] is characterized both by its proximity to the Hudson River and the unrealized potential of the space above the Long Island Rail Road's Caemmerer Yards."⁵⁰ Notably, the plan called for a large-scale development that extended far beyond the boundaries of the Rail Yards encompassing a 42 block area that would hold close to 30 million square feet of commercial office space, 12 million square feet of residential space, and over 20 acres of open public space. The centerpiece of the plan was the stadium which would double as an expansion for the Javits Convention Center immediately to the north.⁵¹ The plan also entailed the extension of the No. 7 subway line and required the city to build a platform over the rail yards to create a base on which the stadium could be built.⁵²

⁴⁹ See for example:

Thomas J. Lueck, "Big Visions for the West Side; Architects Turn Imaginations Loose on the Rail Yards," *The New York Times*, 29 June 1999.

Herbert Muschamp, "A 12-Block Glimmer of Hope for New York," *The New York Times*, 14 March 1999.

Herbert Muschamp, "Design Fantasies for a Strip of the West Side." *The New York Times*, 18 October 1999.

⁵⁰ Appleseed, *Hudson Yards: Assessing the Impact on New York's Economy*, (New York: Taub Urban Research Center, January 2000), 3.

⁵¹ NYC 2012, *Hudson Yards: A Proposal for the West Side Rail Yards*, (New York: NYC 2012, August 2001).

⁵² The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Zoning Presentation*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2004), 13.

In expanding the frame of reference for the initiative from merely the six blocks occupied by the rail yards, to the larger 42-block district extending between Ninth and Twelfth Avenues from 28th to 41st Streets,⁵³ the plan was proposing a vision for change in the neighborhood. Naming the entire area “Hudson Yards” implied that the “redevelopment of the yards is the key catalyst that will transform a larger area”⁵⁴ and could also become a unifying feature of a collective neighborhood identity.

There had never really been a neighborhood that corresponded to the boundaries of Hudson Yards, but there were several official districts that did that overlap in some spots with the newly designated area. In addition to the aforementioned Hell’s Kitchen South, portions of the Special Garment Center District, the Javits Convention Center District, Midtown, and the Special Clinton District all fell within the proposed Hudson Yards District (fig.8). In addition, the District encompassed significant landmarks such as Madison Square Garden, the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the Farley Post Office, Penn Station and the Lincoln Tunnel, all of whom had lent their names and identities to the areas in their immediate vicinities.

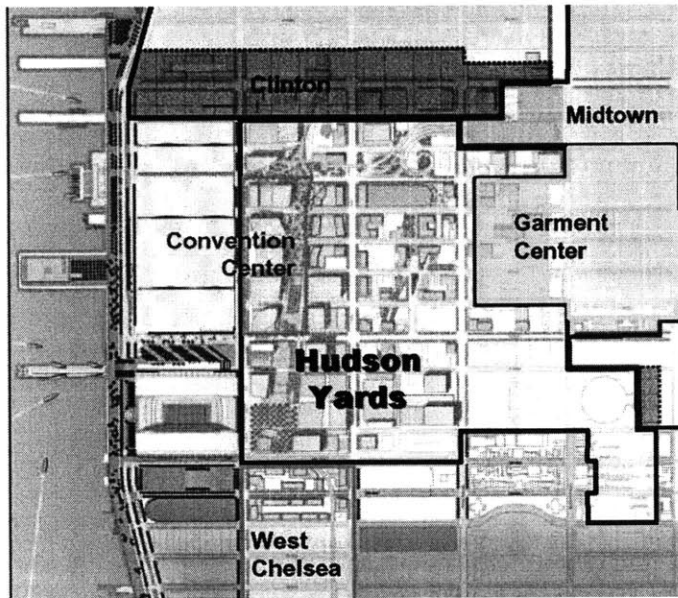


Figure 9: Map of Neighborhoods Adjacent to Hudson Yards. Shaded portions with dotted lines indicate areas where the Hudson Yards boundaries overlap with existing districts.⁵⁵

⁵³ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Zoning Presentation*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2004), 41.

⁵⁴ Vishaan Chakrabarti, Telephone Interview, 7 June 2004.

⁵⁵ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Zoning Presentation*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2004), 38.

Competing views of what Hudson Yards would replace were plentiful and obscured the implications for the neighborhoods that already existed there:

Many outsiders view their neighborhood as an in-your-face congeries of carbonized commuter parking lots, body shops, taxi corrals, carwashes, tow pounds, razor-wire bus-and-truck depots, warehouses, gritty businesses and tenements groaning with railroad flats. But residents say such non-fern-bar elements, plus the presence of its stubbornly diverse working-class population, are good and sufficient reasons to cherish the neighborhood as nothing less than an adornment of the city.⁵⁶

These many conflicting identities thus presented one of the significant challenges facing the adoption of the name Hudson Yards – could it compete with so many legacy names and conflicting identities, and is it reasonable to expect one name to provide an identity for something made up of so many parts?

CITY INVOLVEMENT

When Mayor Michael Bloomberg named the head of NYC 2012 to the role of Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding, NYC 2012's proposals became official municipal policy. In terms of the Hudson Yards proposal, the DCP embraced both the plan and the name. The city began to move aggressively to implement the plan in 2003, introducing a document in February 2003 titled "Hudson Yards Master Plan Preferred Direction." The "Preferred Direction" recommended the creation of a Special Hudson Yards District in the zoning to allow changes in density and use limitations that would result in the desired level and type of mixed-use development.⁵⁷

In this document, the City acknowledged that "Hudson Yards is such an extensive area that it should be thought of as not just one place, but many places. The Preferred Direction identifies five distinct districts, which together will create a vibrant new mixed-use area for New Yorkers."⁵⁸ However these proposed districts were given generic names in the Preferred Direction: "9th Avenue,

⁵⁶ Glenn Collins, "Can Stand the Heat? You'll Like It Here; As Hell's Kitchen's Appeal Rises, Old-Timers Battle Stadium Plan," *The New York Times*, 13 December 2000.

⁵⁷ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Master Plan Preferred Direction*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2003), 18.

⁵⁸ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Master Plan Preferred Direction*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2003), 18.

10th Avenue to the Hudson River, 34th Street Corridor, Warehouse District, and 42nd Street Corridor.”⁵⁹ The proposal did not reflect the names of any of the existing communities.

Upon release of the City’s Preferred Direction, HKNA joined forces with other community, business and civic organizations to form the Hell’s Kitchen/Hudson Yards Alliance, a coalition group that would “provide a balanced community response to the New York City Administration’s plans” for the Hudson Yards area.⁶⁰ It should be noted that at this point the community acknowledged and incorporate the name “Hudson Yards” as part of the area’s identity. This embrace of the Hudson Yards name might have been a tactic to ensure the focus of the discussion and response would be on the plan of the same name. It is nonetheless a sign of acceptance of the legitimacy of the name, if even just to a small extent.

The Hell’s Kitchen/Hudson Yards Alliance submitted a response to the Hudson Yards Plan entitled “HKNA plan for rezoning Hell’s Kitchen/Hudson Yards”, a variation of the “Hell’s Kitchen South: Development Strategies” 197-a plan that they had put forward in 2000. In recognition of the existing community on Ninth and Tenth Avenues, they suggested a compromise solution: naming the area Hell’s Kitchen/Hudson Yards, a combination of the Hudson Yards name with the legacy of the prevailing Hell’s Kitchen South in the ancillary areas.⁶¹ Maps in the HKNA plan centered the Hell’s Kitchen name over Tenth Avenue (fig.9).

⁵⁹ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Master Plan Preferred Direction*, (New York City Department of City Planning, February 2003), 18.

⁶⁰ Hell’s Kitchen / Hudson Yards Alliance, “About Us,” (New York: Hell’s Kitchen/Hudson Yards Alliance, April 2004) <http://www.hkhyalliance.org/Aboutus/Membmission.htm> (accessed August 6, 2004).

⁶¹ Hell’s Kitchen Neighborhood Association, *HKNA Plan for Rezoning Hell’s Kitchen/Hudson Yards*, (New York: Hell’s Kitchen Neighborhood Association, 2004) <http://home.earthlink.net/~hkna/assets/flash/hkna-frameleft.htm> (accessed May 24, 2004).

IV. Case Study: Hudson Yards, Manhattan

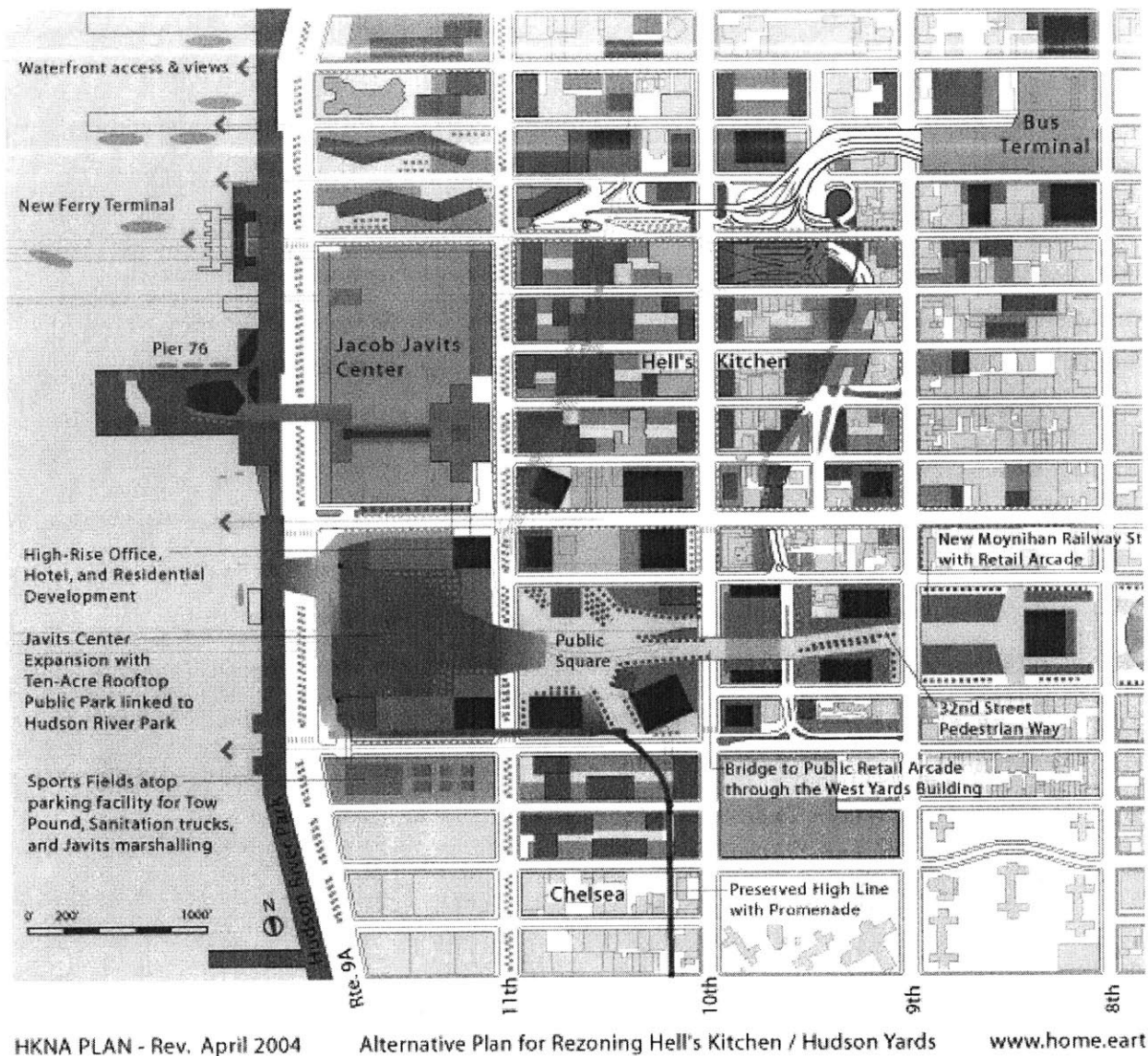


Figure 10: Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards Alliance Plan⁶²

⁶² Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association, *HKNA Plan for Rezoning Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards*, (New York: Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association, 2004) <http://home.earthlink.net/~hkna/assets/flash/hkna-frameleft.htm> (accessed May 24, 2004).

Community Board 4 (CB4), which includes the Hudson Yards area in addition to Chelsea and Clinton, also supported the naming combination of Hell's Kitchen /Hudson Yards.⁶³ CB4 addressed naming as a significant issue in itself in a 2003 letter to the DCP, suggesting that since the

...DCP has recognized that the area is composed of mixed districts. The nomenclature should reflect those diverse identities. The Board seeks to reconcile the historic identity of Hell's Kitchen - a recognizable name long associated with the City of New York - and Hudson Yards - *a descriptive but placeless term in City nomenclature*. So, in an effort to bridge the 19th century to the 21st, the Board requests that any special zoning district be named the "Special Hell's Kitchen / Hudson Yards District."⁶⁴

This suggestion, while not elegant, was an indication of the neighborhood's willingness to entertain a new vision for the area that would also preserve the identity and legitimacy of the existing community. It could also be interpreted as move that would allow them to push back on the City, to remind the City that there were in fact communities and stakeholders on the ground that could not be overlooked or excluded from the process. Putting the Hell's Kitchen name first could be interpreted as a subtle strategy to ensure that in the event that people abbreviated the combined name (theoretically by dropping the latter half of the name); it would be the Hudson Yards part that would be dropped. Given the argument that Hudson Yards was a "placeless" term in City nomenclature, I would argue that it is more likely that the "recognizable name long associated with the City of New York," i.e. Hell's Kitchen, would be the part of the name that is kept in the event of abbreviation.

DCP ZONING PROPOSALS

In February of 2004, after extensive community consultations, the DCP presented an adapted version of the Hudson Yards Plan. Among the many changes from earlier versions, the plan included a sub-district named for Hell's Kitchen, a result of the back-and-forth that the city engaged in with HKNA to address their concerns. In June of 2004, the proposal passed its initial Department of City Planning Certification, allowing it to officially enter the public review process, with press releases boasting that the plans will "transform an under-utilized swath of the west side of

⁶³ Simone Sindin and Anna Hayes Levin, *Letter to DCP, re: DCP's "Preferred Direction" for Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards*, March 24, 2003. <http://www.manhattancb4.org/> (accessed May 24, 2004).

⁶⁴ Simone Sindin and Anna Hayes Levin, *Letter to DCP, re: DCP's "Preferred Direction" for Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards*, March 24, 2003. <http://www.manhattancb4.org/> (accessed May 24, 2004).

Manhattan, known as Hudson Yards, into a thriving business and residential district.”⁶⁵ However, while promoting the Hudson Yards name, the zoning proposal also continues to acknowledge the identity of the Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood by referring to the “the low-and medium scale character of the residential Hell’s Kitchen area.”⁶⁶

After going through the ULURP process, the Department expects the plan to be adopted by January 2005, thus officially changing the name of the area to the Special Hudson Yards District.⁶⁷ In this case, the City has staked a claim on the name – but has also left the door open for some other sub-districts. It remains to be seen, however, whether this name will in fact become the name for the neighborhood (or a portion of it) as development gets underway.

SUMMARY

While naming is a logical solution to the challenge of getting people to think of the area in a new light, the experience of the Hudson Yards District plans point out the risk of doing so in a context where there already is an existing community. A fundamental issue at the heart of this case is how the neighborhood can be perceived very differently by various stakeholders. The neighborhood names used by each group are a reflection of both their view of the existing area as well as their vision for the area. The name chosen to describe the area provides a strong hint as to the intentions of the city (or any other actor) with respect to the existing neighborhoods.

Naming in this case was used as both protection by the existing communities as well as propaganda to forward the agenda of the city, even if the names did not always reflect the reality on the ground. As one resident has pointed out, the power of naming is very much in its implication: “the first thing you do to tear down a neighborhood and rebuild it is to take away its name.”⁶⁸ Here we have seen the power of a name to demoralize and de-legitimize a community’s claim on an area.

The city has long sought to catalyze development and fund infrastructure changes in the Hudson Yards area, with officials publicly announcing that it was their desire to see growth and

⁶⁵ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, “City Planning Certifies Hudson Yards Plan Beginning Public Review of West Side Redevelopment as Economic Engine for NYC,” Press Release, 21 June 2004.

⁶⁶ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Proposed Zoning Text and Map Amendments: ULURP Nos. 040499 ZMM, N 040500 ZRM*, (New York City Department of City Planning, 21 June 2004), 6.

⁶⁷ The City of New York, Department of City Planning, *Hudson Yards Zoning Presentation* (February 2004), 41.

⁶⁸ Kelly Crow, “Neighborhood Report: Clinton; If You Can't Stand the Name, Get Out of Hell's Kitchen,” *The New York Times*, 21 April 2002.

development in the area.⁶⁹ Expressing their openness to suggestions in the hope that proposals would materialize did not provide enough of an incentive to developers to overcome the barriers they perceived to development of the area. Only later did the City “recognize that this effort needed a catalyst... that would encourage new development,”⁷⁰ leading to the Hudson Yards Plan.

On the other side of the debate, “more than a few in the neighborhood are offended by the notion that so many outsiders are busily drawing up plans for Hell's Kitchen as if it were some empty swamp by the Hudson. More than 45,000 people already live there in a historic and complex neighborhood....”⁷¹ They talk about redoing this neighborhood as if it didn't already exist,⁷¹ In another context, Fisher has re-iterated: “They're pretending this area is empty. But it's not empty. It's full of tax-producing businesses.”⁷²

As a precedent to the Hudson Yards discussion, many have speculated on the reasons for wanting to replace “Hell’s Kitchen” with “Clinton” – to shed the notoriety, to encourage gentrification, to honor historical figures, to improve business, to sell real estate, to recognize major public actions and landmarks, to build community pride, and finally, to create a sense of identity. The same could be said for the shift to “Hudson Yards”.

There is a logic to grouping an otherwise disparate collection of blocks and features into an area under one name – it allows one to consider the multiple actions as all linked to a common goal – the long-term transformation and development of the last large underutilized area of Manhattan. Of the many names that have graced the area few have managed to evoke the entirety of the area. The fairly generic “Far West Side” was certainly not evocative enough to generate the excitement and vision that are required if large developers are to be lured to the area. While some have suggested that the “Far West Side” is no different from Boston’s West End, I would beg to differ, on the basis of the history that is embedded in the name West End in Boston. In other cities, meanwhile, neighborhoods named the West End have actually sought to change the name because West End had a connotation of “the wrong side of the tracks”.⁷³ But in the case of New York City, the name “Far West Side” evokes less of a neighborhood identity, per se, and instead a geographic designation

⁶⁹ David W. Dunlap, “Far West Side: a Vision of the Far Future,” *The New York Times*, 30 March 2003.

⁷⁰ David W. Dunlap, “Far West Side: a Vision of the Far Future,” *The New York Times*, 30 March 2003.

⁷¹ Glenn Collins, “Can Stand the Heat? You'll Like It Here; As Hell's Kitchen's Appeal Rises, Old-Timers Battle Stadium Plan,” *The New York Times*, 13 December 2000.

⁷² David W. Dunlap, “Far West Side: a Vision of the Far Future,” *The New York Times*, 30 March 2003.

⁷³ John I. Gilderbloom, Personal Communication via H-NET Urban History Discussion List, 28 May 2004.

using other neighborhoods (i.e. Midtown and the West Side) as reference points. The “Convention Center District” was equally bland and uninspiring.

Of them all, it seems that Hell’s Kitchen has been the most attractive name because it is substantial – it suggests an intrigue, a history, an identity. Part of the challenge in this case is a question of where Hell’s Kitchen is – those backing the plan “thought of Hell’s Kitchen as north of 42nd Street” and argue that “it is a stretch to call the area across the street from the convention center Hell’s Kitchen.”⁷⁴ In the end, I am sure that Hudson Yards will come into use for a portion of the proposed district, if not the entire area. But Hell’s Kitchen will continue as a local designation, thanks to the codification as a sub-district, as well as to its appeal given its history, identity and image.

⁷⁴ Vishaan Chakrabarti, Telephone Interview, 7 June 2004.

V. Case Study: The Ladder District, Boston

The “Ladder District” is a name of a Boston neighborhood that was introduced in 2001. It refers to a series of blocks in downtown Boston that run between Tremont and Washington Streets running roughly from Boylston Street to School Street. The neighborhood is also adjacent to what used to be known as the “Combat Zone” (notorious for its reputation as a ‘red-light’ and adult entertainment district enacted through zoning by the City) and the Theatre District, and is considered by most to be part of the larger Downtown Crossing area. The introduction of the name has coincided with a spurt of re-investment in the area, notably several new restaurants, bars, retail shops and a major hotel / luxury apartment / movie theatre complex.

Since its emergence, the Ladder District name has been used most consistently by public relations professionals who represent some of the restaurants in the Ladder District and the media outlets focused on travel and leisure, targets of much of the PR promoting the neighborhood. However the name has not yet been adopted by the general public or the City of Boston and realtors have been inconsistent in their use of the name, most likely because it does not yet resonate with many prospective tenants.

ORIGINS

In 1974, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the newly formed Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) engaged in a planning study to identify parts of downtown that lacked residential neighborhoods and had buildings “with historic character.”¹ Their objective was to create neighborhoods that would be active twenty-four hours a day while encouraging the re-use of historic buildings. As they began to identify some target areas, they found that many had historic names, such as the Leather District and the Custom House District, but others were in parts of the city that had always been somewhat more anonymous. For those target neighborhoods that did not have a distinct identity or name “a real estate professional suggested that names would be good for identity and for marketing.”²

¹ Ellen Lipsey, Personal Communication, 11 June 2004.

² Ellen Lipsey, Personal Communication, 11 June 2004.

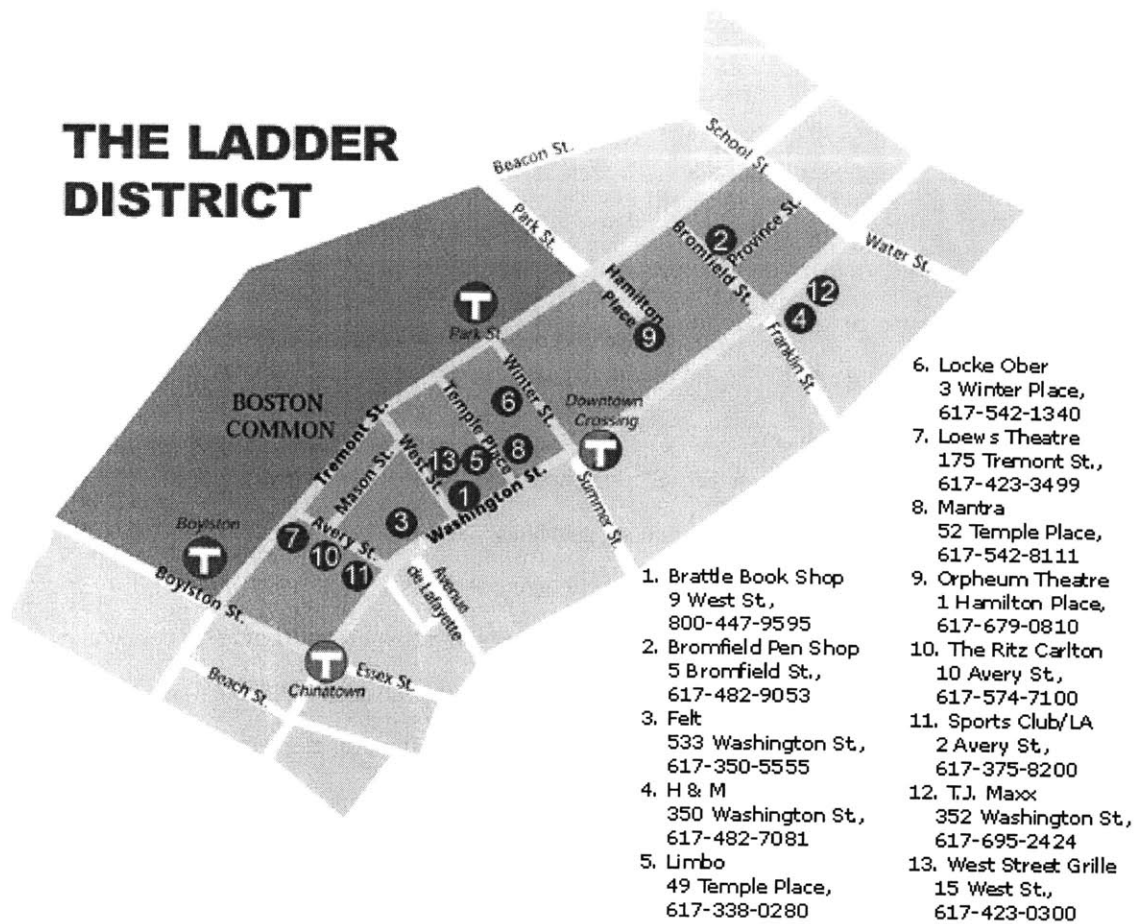


Figure 11: The Ladder District³

The area that is today's Ladder District had been identified as having strong redevelopment potential and under-used buildings that were considered representative of the area's "rich history as a commercial, cultural and residential center."⁴ But the area also fell into the category of nameless areas, prompting the planners to coin a name for the area in question: "the Ladder Blocks." The name was in reference to the configuration of the blocks as seen on a map or from an aerial perspective, with Washington and Tremont as the ladder's rails and the short blocks in between, from School Street to Boylston Street, as the rungs.⁵

³ Andrew King, "Stepping Up," *Panorama Magazine*, n.d., http://www.panoramamagazine.com/panoramamagazine/articles/stepping_up.asp (accessed December 7, 2003).

⁴ City of Boston Office of Arts & Humanities and Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Midtown Cultural District Plan: Plan to Manage Growth: Downtown Zoning*, (Boston: City of Boston, January 1989), 80.

⁵ The Bulfinch Triangle also derived its name from this study.

While the name did not catch on outside of the BRA and BLC, they did continue to use it as a “planning tool” within their offices as an easy way to refer to that part of the city.⁶ But no mention was made of the Ladder Blocks in 1978 when the city “converted the intersection of Washington, Summer, and Winter Streets to a pedestrian zone”⁷ and gave Boston’s historic retail core the name Downtown Crossing, even though the Downtown Crossing neighborhood included the Ladder Blocks. Evidently, the name had not stuck.

In 1989 when the City released its *Midtown Cultural District Plan*, the plan included a brief discussion referring to the “ladder blocks”⁸ within the framework of Historic Preservation. However, no mention of the ladder blocks was made in any of the extensive discussion of the surrounding area, existing neighborhoods or proposed neighborhoods—reference to the ladder blocks was strictly focused on the historic quality, architecture and scale of the buildings on the blocks. But owing to their exceptional quality, the plan recommended the creation of a “Ladder Blocks Historic District” in order to protect the existing buildings from “development pressure” which might otherwise lead to their destruction.⁹

While this is a clear indication that the city did not at the time consider the area a neighborhood unto itself, it is notable that they did acknowledge that the blocks had a distinct architectural style that was worth preserving and calling out, and that this could be the basis of an identity and name suggesting a distinct neighborhood. Ultimately, this recommendation was never implemented, conceivably because of the unique difficulties of creating a historic district in Downtown Boston, which requires a two-thirds vote of City Council (as opposed to a simple majority vote required for any other place in Massachusetts).¹⁰ But even had the City successfully created a “Ladder Blocks Historic District”, there is no indication that the “Ladder Blocks” name would have been popularized by this action. This point is illustrated by the fact that the same study mentions six other neighborhoods within the proposed Midtown Cultural District that were already Historic Districts listed in the National Register of Historic Districts, of which only one appears to have

⁶ Roysin Billett, Personal Interview, 1 June 2004.

⁷ Downtown Crossing Association, “History,” (Boston: Downtown Crossing Association, n.d.), <http://www.downtowncrossing.org/about/history.htm> (accessed July 12, 2004).

⁸ City of Boston Office of Arts & Humanities and Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Midtown Cultural District Plan: Plan to Manage Growth: Downtown Zoning*, (Boston: City of Boston, January 1989), 80.

⁹ City of Boston Office of Arts & Humanities and Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Midtown Cultural District Plan: Plan to Manage Growth: Downtown Zoning*, (Boston: City of Boston, January 1989), 77.

¹⁰ City of Boston Office of Arts & Humanities and Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Midtown Cultural District Plan: Plan to Manage Growth: Downtown Zoning*, (Boston: City of Boston, January 1989), 76.

entered the vernacular – the Washington Street Historic Theater District, abbreviated to today’s Theater District.¹¹

This example suggests that while recognition and protection of a name (in this case, by listing as a Historic District) might be a contributing factor to the establishment of a neighborhood name, such an act is not a guarantee of its adoption.

RESURRECTION AND ADAPTATION

In the 1990s real estate developer Millennium Partners acquired two parking lots on the ladder blocks which fronted on Washington Street. The historic character of the area, with unoccupied but architecturally attractive buildings remained full of the potential for revitalization that had been suggested by the Landmarks Commission twenty years earlier, and which was now being successfully realized across the country in similar neighborhoods. While Millennium still considered the area where these blocks were located “the Combat Zone, a rundown mix of stores, theaters and sex-related businesses,”¹² they also recognized the potential for redevelopment in the area and thus viewed the parcels as “hidden treasure.”¹³ But the location of the ladder blocks was definitely considered a risk, despite being officially outside the borders of the Combat Zone.

Like Millennium, most people did not consider the ladder blocks area any different from its more salubrious neighbor, expecting the “spillover effect” to have a negative impact on the area.¹⁴ Some considered the neighborhood part of Downtown Crossing, including the proprietors of many venerable businesses on the ladder blocks that had long been associated with the Downtown Crossing neighborhood. Still others considered it “halfway between nothing – not Downtown Crossing, not the Theatre District.”¹⁵ The area’s identity was further undistinguished by the physical condition of the area – the streets were poorly lit, there were few amenities such as trash cans or

¹¹ The other areas listed in the National Register of Historic Places are: Piano Row, Newspaper Row, the Liberty Tree District, the West Street Historic District, and the Beach/Knapp Historic District.

City of Boston Office of Arts & Humanities and Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Midtown Cultural District Plan: Plan to Manage Growth: Downtown Zoning*, (Boston: City of Boston, January 1989), 75.

¹² David W. Dunlap, “What’s in a Name? For Ritz-Carlton, About 25%,” *The New York Times*, 10 April 2002.

¹³ David W. Dunlap, “What’s in a Name? For Ritz-Carlton, About 25%,” *The New York Times*, 10 April 2002.

¹⁴ Christophe Bergeron, “Boston – Ladder District: En haut de l’échelle,” *Voir.ca*, October 2002.

Chris Lyons, Telephone Interview, 27 May 2004.

¹⁵ Rosanne Mercer, Telephone Interview, 26 May 2004.

trees, and many of the storefronts were vacant, contributing to the image of an abandoned side street.¹⁶

To address the risks of developing in this unproven neighborhood, the Ritz and Millennium planned to develop 1.8 million square feet at once, in the hope that the size of the development would be large enough to begin to change perceptions of the neighborhood.¹⁷ In the year 2000 Millennium began construction on a high-end hotel and luxury apartment complex with the Ritz Carlton name. In addition to the luxury apartment and hotel components – which would infuse the area with a residential population – the development was to include an upscale restaurant and bar, a luxury health club, and a 15-screen Loews movie theatre, all of which would serve to further populate and activate the neighborhood in the evenings.

City planners as well as the developers were optimistic about Millennium's plans for the area, hoping that whatever would ensue would catalyze the redevelopment of the area, which was "seedy and lifeless", especially after 5pm.¹⁸

The area's potential was meanwhile also recognized by several entrepreneurs in the restaurant and bar business, who were attracted to the historic buildings, low real estate prices, and the proximity of the area to the Financial District and the Back Bay – and the young professionals who worked and lived there. These were the target market for both Millennium and the restaurateurs, upwardly mobile, sophisticated, seeking entertainment and dining options that mirrored experiences in the 'hip' neighborhoods of New York, London and Miami. Those cities had seen many of their own neighborhoods transformed from seedy and abandoned to destinations for high-end restaurants, clubs and luxury apartments. Some of these newly revitalized neighborhoods had also emerged with "new" names. The entrepreneurs in the ladder blocks saw an opportunity to replicate that success in Boston.

Finally, residential buyers who considered themselves 'pioneers' – those who invest in less polished neighborhoods as an act of speculation – also began to recognize the potential in the neighborhood, and began to purchase lofts in the area in anticipation of increasing property values.

¹⁶ Rosanne Mercer, Telephone Interview, 26 May 2004.

¹⁷ David W. Dunlap, "What's in a Name? For Ritz-Carlton, About 25%," *The New York Times*, 10 April 2002.

¹⁸ David W. Dunlap, "What's in a Name? For Ritz-Carlton, About 25%," *The New York Times*, 10 April 2002.

LAUNCHING THE NEIGHBORHOOD NAME

By 2001 two new restaurants, a bar, and the Ritz were ready to come online, all within a few weeks (and a few steps) of each other. Mantra was a new restaurant aimed at a clientele that sought stylish destinations in the style of high-end New York City locales. Limbo was an upscale Jazz-bar located one block east of the new hotel, and blu was a restaurant located in the Ritz development.

As is now the norm in the hospitality industry the hotel, restaurants, and bars engaged in a significant public relations effort to herald the arrival of their new properties. Not surprisingly, the publicists responsible for promoting these various properties were wary of the image projected by the location in the Downtown Crossing and Combat Zone neighborhoods – both were considered inappropriate locations for upscale properties that targeted sophisticated, moneyed audiences. Even with such a large-scale development as the Millennium project, they were not expecting the image of the neighborhood to create itself.

Familiar with the emergence of ‘hip’ neighborhoods such as the Meatpacking District in New York City,¹⁹ the publicists were convinced that success in the ladder blocks would be predicated not only on the critical mass of development, but on creating a new neighborhood image that appealed to their desired sophisticated clientele that was constantly seeking out the new and trendy.²⁰ These publicists began to orchestrate a campaign to "re-brand" the neighborhood into a "lifestyle destination district,"²¹ using a formula that had been employed by many other neighborhoods. This formula involved the popularization of a name, ideally one that might evoke some past uses or history – i.e., to create an image and an identity, targeted at people who might have never considered the neighborhood before.

The publicists also thought it was important to separate the district from the larger Downtown Crossing area in order to draw attention to the distinct nature of their businesses. Whereas Downtown Crossing was primarily a shopping destination and marketed itself as “a neighborhood

¹⁹ New York City’s Meatpacking District, literally the area of the city populated by wholesale butcher and meatpacking businesses for several generations, has recently seen the neighborhood transformed into a high-end nightlife and retail destination. The identity of the neighborhood was of gritty streets filled with the stench of carcasses and shuttered warehouses, dead and abandoned after dark. Initially, the nightclubs and meatpackers lived a symbiotic relationship, occupying the area at opposing times of day and night, and the name was a colorful and ironic moniker for an area where those who were probably the least likely to be meatpackers to find themselves. But as the district grew in popularity, many of the meatpacking businesses left the area. Today, a few old-line businesses remain, as does the name, but one is more likely to find many clubs, restaurants, bars, designer boutiques and even luxury housing.

²⁰ Rosanne Mercer, Telephone Interview, 26 May 2004.

²¹ Joanna Weiss, “Ladder to Success Step by Step, Publicists Help Turn Shabby Area into Hip New District for Boston’s Martini Crowd,” *The Boston Globe*, 9 February 2003.

for the entire city...diverse, with lots of children, tourists, and different types of retail,”²² the emerging identity of their area was more nightlife-oriented, geared towards a “different crowd...appealing to a more sophisticated clientele.”²³

“BOSTON’S NEWEST OLD NEIGHBORHOOD”²⁴

The strategy set, the publicists now needed a name for this newly conceptualized area. When the owners of Limbo had gone to City Hall to get the proper permits, the clerk on duty had informed them that the bar was in fact in the “ladder blocks” and not Downtown Crossing as they had assumed. The publicists, upon hearing the story, jumped on the concept, changed the “blocks” to a “District” (thinking that “District” would be more evocative of a neighborhood than “blocks”), and began to promote the area as such to the media, being sure to emphasize that it was very different from Downtown Crossing.²⁵

Reflecting the appeal of their clients, the publicists targeted mostly travel and leisure journalists with press releases insisting on the Ladder District name and promoting the neighborhood as “up and coming,” the “new high-energy core of the city,”²⁶ the “new epicenter of Downtown Crossing”²⁷ and a “dynamic entertainment area.”²⁸ The first mention of the Ladder District in the press may well have been in January, 2001, when the *Nation’s Restaurant News* discussed the soon-to-be opened restaurant Mantra, “located in the city’s ‘emerging Ladder District.’”²⁹ The publicist for

²² Anne Meyers, Telephone Interview, 9 June 2004.

²³ Chris Lyons, Telephone Interview, 27 May 2004.

Joanna Weiss, “Ladder to Success Step by Step, Publicists Help Turn Shabby Area into Hip New District for Boston’s Martini Crowd,” *The Boston Globe*, 9 February 2003.

²⁴ Charles P. Pierce, “Golden Opportunity,” *The Boston Globe*, 14 March 2004.

²⁵ Joanna Weiss, “Ladder to Success Step by Step, Publicists Help Turn Shabby Area into Hip New District for Boston’s Martini Crowd,” *The Boston Globe*, 9 February 2003.

²⁶ Joanna Weiss, “Ladder to Success Step by Step, Publicists Help Turn Shabby Area into Hip New District for Boston’s Martini Crowd,” *The Boston Globe*, 9 February 2003.

²⁷ Christophe Bergeron, “Boston – Ladder District: En haut de l’échelle,” *Voir.ca*, October 2002.

Chris Lyons, Personal Interview, 27 May 2004.

²⁸ “Boston gets a makeover too,” *The Times (London)*, 19 April 2003, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,161-650258,00.html> (accessed May 19, 2004).

²⁹ Beth Teitell, “Downtown Neighborhood is Climbing the Social Ladder,” *The Boston Herald*, 25 October 2001.

the Ritz, Caron LeBrun, promoted a “Ladder District Package” for guests, which highlighted the local restaurants and bars and offered free or discounted meals in the Ladder District.³⁰

Meanwhile, the City and the BRA, while pleased to see any reinvestment and redevelopment, did not officially promote the name. While the city had sought for many years to address the negative perceptions of the neighborhood in order to stimulate reinvestment and revitalization, by the time the Ladder District emerged the neighborhood was not longer the focus of any initiatives by the BRA or the City³¹. As for as the Ladder District name, it was considered by the BRA as primarily “a marketing effort on the part of the retail sector.”³²

Also in contrast to the reception by the press the Downtown Crossing Association, a local business association that promotes the businesses located in Downtown Crossing, did not endorse or promote the emergence of the Ladder District. In their opinion, those blocks were part of Downtown Crossing, having been included in the original establishment of the district by the City in 1978. Furthermore, the streets of the Ladder District were adorned with the same banners that were used throughout the rest of the Downtown Crossing District to indicate that one is in fact in that neighborhood. And finally, most of the establishments within the “Ladder District” were also members of the Downtown Crossing Association (including Mantra and blu).³³

While some may suggest that this was simply a “turf war” between the Ladder District and the Downtown Crossing Association, the intentions of the publicists promoting the businesses in the Ladder District were clearly to separate the Ladder District from the Downtown Crossing area. They did not attempt to embed the Ladder District as a sub-neighborhood within the larger Downtown Crossing area, which I believe was a fundamental error. By separating themselves from Downtown Crossing, the proponents of the Ladder District discarded what could have been a valuable point of reference for their audiences, as well as a layer of the area’s identity that could have added color and a sense of history to the neighborhood. Given that the Ladder District was an unknown construct, this would have allowed them to situate themselves within the context of the larger Downtown area, as well as to add a depth of identity that is usually found in most neighborhoods.

³⁰ Joanna Weiss, “Ladder to Success Step by Step, Publicists Help Turn Shabby Area into Hip New District for Boston’s Martini Crowd,” *The Boston Globe*, 9 February 2003.

³¹ Andrew Grace, Telephone Interview, 27 May 2004.

³² Andrew Grace, Telephone Interview, 27 May 2004.

³³ Anne Meyers, Telephone Interview, 9 June 2004.

However, the publicists were determined to ensure that the Ladder District would present an identity that was not necessarily steeped in history, but that evoked the sophistication and high-style that their clients were hoping to cultivate. To that end, they were less concerned with including the other stakeholders and constituents in the area and to developing a shared identity, which translated into a disinterest in the Downtown Crossing Association. One might also speculate that the disinterest from the City and the BRA was related to the conflict between those two names, given that the city was involved in creating the Downtown Crossing neighborhood in the first place, resulting in an obligation to accept their interpretation.

RECEPTION

Many of the media targets were initially skeptical of the new designation, and while some used the name, it was often prefaced with “new,” “emerging,” “burgeoning”³⁴ and other similar adjectives. Others, wary of buying into something that was so “self-consciously trendy,” would use the name but in the spirit of “full disclosure” mention that they heard the name from “marketing types.”³⁵ Many of the early articles questioned the validity of the name, both outright or in passing, mentioning the “so-called” Ladder District, suggesting that “the powers that be are even trying to give the ‘hood a hip, new name – the Ladder District (don’t ask),”³⁶ or leading with “Ladder District?...you’ll need a little imagination.”³⁷

Local journalists also made a story out of the ‘attempts’ of the neighborhood to re-name itself, mentioning that “The area from lower Washington Street to Downtown Crossing even has a new, trendy name: the Ladder District,”³⁸ while others reported the emergence of the new name but their own reluctance to adopt it, claiming that they were “still calling it Downtown Crossing – Combat Zone” and suggesting that “the area has not become part of their mental cityscape.”³⁹ This is a

³⁴ Alexandra Hall, “Social Climbing,” *Boston Magazine*, November 2001.

³⁵ Tina Cassidy, “The Ladder District has as Many Definitions of Proper Dress as it Does Hot New Nightspots,” *The Boston Globe*, 17 November 2001.

³⁶ Christopher Muther, “Go! Monday: in Limbo,” *The Boston Globe*, 20 August 2001.

³⁷ Paul Massari, “Destination: Ladder District? A Downtown Neighborhood Goes from Shabby to Chic,” *The Boston Globe*, 27 September 2001.

³⁸ Anthony Flint, “Planning the Fragmented Metropolis: Acting Regionally and Locally,” in *Governing Greater Boston: The Politics and Policy of Place*, ed. Charles C. Euchner. (Cambridge, MA: The Press at the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, 2002), 207.

³⁹ Monica Collins, “Downtown Journal; Ladder District Takes Big Step Up As Trendy Hotspot,” *The Boston Herald*, 17 February 2002.

telling comment, suggesting that there is a willingness to embrace a new identity, but the successful entrenchment of the name is very personal. It also illustrates how it takes more than a new name, some press releases and new businesses to transform a neighborhood.

Despite the skepticism from the general press, travel and leisure magazines, publications who continuously seek out 'the next big thing' for their audiences were quick to pick up the news item – articles extolling the renaissance of the district appeared in Condé Nast Traveler, Panorama Magazine, the Amtrak magazine, and Boston Magazine, as well as travel and food sections of various newspapers and websites. Others spoke of the area being "...on the cusp of a reawakening."⁴⁰ Word of mouth "buzz" grew among those who constantly seek the "next cool neighborhood."⁴¹

LONG-TERM PROSPECTS FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD NAME

Only one year after its introduction, the BRA⁴² seemed to believe that the Ladder District had succeeded in reviving the area and becoming part of the people's "mental cityscape," claiming that "the Ladder District is gaining momentum in city life and culture, with people moving on in and moving on up... Class C vacant office space there has become more valuable. Certainly nightlife has improved."⁴³

However in retrospect their commentary appears to have been premature. After the initial burst of openings in 2001, very few new businesses were established, and Limbo, one of the original establishments, closed within a year. Partially attributed to the downturn in the economy experienced after 9/11, this diminished level of attention to the neighborhood and a loss of the sense of urgency and activity did little to support the idea that this was in fact a neighborhood that was experiencing a full-scale revitalization. Only a few of the publicists were retained to continue

⁴⁰ "Boston gets a makeover too," *The Times (London)*, 19 April 2003, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,161-650258,00.html> (accessed May 19, 2004).

⁴¹ "They call the new trendy section of Boston the Ladder District."
Truman Taylor, "Memories of Nick in the Avery Lobby," *The Providence Journal-Bulletin*, 3 May 2002.

"...the Ladder District is decidedly turning more chic than shabby."
Paul Massari, "Destination: Ladder District? A Downtown Neighborhood Goes from Shabby to Chic," *The Boston Globe*, 27 September 2001.

"... it's a hip neighborhood."
Christopher Muther, "Go! Monday: in Limbo," *The Boston Globe*, 20 August 2001.

⁴² Apparently, while the BRA did not officially recognize the neighborhood, they were still able to comment on it, which suggests either a political reason for not adopting the name, or inconsistency and/or changes between 2002 and 2004 in their policy regarding the Ladder District.

⁴³ Monica Collins, "Downtown Journal; Ladder District Takes Big Step Up As 'Trendy Hotspot,'" *The Boston Herald*, 17 February 2002.

promoting the businesses and the name, but PR efforts did not continue to the same degree as in they had in the early months of the restaurant openings.

In June, 2004, Chris Lyons, the publicist for Mantra, granted that on the whole, “the district hasn’t coalesced yet – it is still a very loose association.”⁴⁴ Others expressed skepticism as to whether there was “enough there to call it a neighborhood,”⁴⁵ as well as to its long-term prospects for redevelopment. Many of the storefronts and buildings remained vacant, while other businesses on the streets within the Ladder District had still not heard of the name and did not yet consider themselves part of “The Ladder District”, wherever it may be.⁴⁶

Reflecting this stagnation, the general press continue to use the term hesitantly, reminding people that it is ‘now called’ the Ladder District -- recognizing that the name has not taken full hold in the public image of the city, but only in the mind of certain groups of people – officials, development folks, those in the know, “people who are far more astute about their dining and their entertainment needs.”⁴⁷ Many of the travel, leisure and dining journalists, however, have dropped the prefixes and begun to use the name as they would any other – it is no longer the ‘new new thing,’ having been usurped by more recent openings or ‘newer’ neighborhoods.

Three years after the first optimistic reports, many still consider the area ripe for revitalization, and are now looking to the newly restored Opera House on Washington Street to be the center and catalyst of the next round of revitalization.⁴⁸ In a March 2004 article about the Opera House (which lies on the border of the Ladder District), the area was still characterized as “...one of the city’s most neglected neighborhoods,”⁴⁹ suggesting that past efforts had not succeeded in reviving the neighborhood. But the article also referred to the neighborhood as the “Ladder District,”

⁴⁴ Chris Lyons, Telephone Interview, 27 May 2004.

⁴⁵ Beth Teitell, “Downtown Neighborhood is Climbing the Social Ladder,” *The Boston Herald*, 25 October 2001.

⁴⁶ Civic Strategies, Inc., “The Ladder of Success,” (Atlanta: Civic Strategies, Inc., n.d.), <http://www.google.com/search?q=cache:jpMbbdsi2l8J:www.civic-strategies.com/resources/metros/boston.htm+%22ladder+district%22+civic&hl=en&lr=&ie=UTF-8&strip=1> (accessed December 1, 2003).

⁴⁷ Joanna Weiss, “Ladder to Success Step by Step, Publicists Help Turn Shabby Area into Hip New District for Boston’s Martini Crowd,” *The Boston Globe*, 9 February 2003.

Charles P. Pierce, “Golden Opportunity,” *The Boston Globe*, 14 March 2004.

⁴⁸ Charles P. Pierce, “Golden Opportunity,” *The Boston Globe*, 14 March 2004.

⁴⁹ Charles P. Pierce, “Golden Opportunity,” *The Boston Globe*, 14 March 2004.

mentioning that it used to be called Downtown Crossing, but implying that Ladder District was as valid as any other name, even though it had started as “a figment of somebody’s imagination”.⁵⁰

SUMMARY

In the Ladder District, the introduction of a new name was meant to herald the dramatic changes of the neighborhood, in this case a change of uses from adult entertainment district and shopping, to an upscale nightlife district. These changes had the potential to strongly affect the image of the neighborhood and provide a legitimate reason to introduce a new name.

At the same time, real estate development professionals did acknowledge that the success of the revitalization of the neighborhood (and thus reasons to adopt a new name) would “...largely depend on whether the real estate market stays strong.”⁵¹ Unfortunately, the timing of the ‘renaming’ and the initial projects was unlucky, and very little investment activity followed the initial burst of investment. The catalytic effect of the Millennium project was not enough to lift the entire district up, and the absence of reinvestment activity made it difficult to make a case for a new identity and name for the area.

Despite this disappointment in the short term, long term potential remains for the, demonstrated by the newest project that might be considered a catalyst, the re-opening of the Opera House. However, there are several barriers to success that will have to be addressed in order to realize the successful establishment of the Ladder District. First, in terms of imagery, the Opera House could just as easily be included as part of the Theatre District by nature of its use, if function were to trump geography in the image of the city – despite the Opera House’s location within the Ladder District. Thus, for this last point, the buildings that give the district its *raison d’être* might actually be the barriers. The building stock holds additional answers for why, even with a trendy new name, little investment has been attracted to the area.

Second, is the unique architectural quality of the Ladder Blocks; while it was this attribute that distinguished them and formed the basis for their identity, it might also be its curse. The buildings on the Ladder Blocks do not have alleyways or elevators – anyone interested in redevelopment would therefore have to invest large sums to both upgrade the buildings and provide the level of service to make them competitive with other products and neighborhoods. To make such

⁵⁰ Charles P. Pierce, “Golden Opportunity,” *The Boston Globe*, 14 March 2004.

⁵¹ Alexandra Hall, “Social Climbing,” *Boston Magazine*, November 2001.

investments cost-effective, ownership of the buildings (which is quite fragmented today) would have to be consolidated. In the meantime, alternatives abound in other parts of the city, including in the Leather District, that do not require as extensive and complicated refurbishment.⁵²

It may just be a question of time and development horizons – the instigators of the Ladder District sought to transform an area in a period of a few months. Experience shows that neighborhood change occurs over a much longer period of time – and perhaps only then can a new name have legitimacy.

⁵² Anne Meyers, Telephone Interview, 9 June 2004.

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VI. Analysis

REVISITING THE HYPOTHESES

NAMING AS A MARKETING TOOL

- Neighborhood naming is only about branding and marketing, an attempt to create a “destination” that can attract visitors, tenants, residents.
- Neighborhood naming is a superficial tactic that has little impact on the neighborhood itself.

While the impact of marketing and branding has been clear throughout the cases studies, they have also illustrated how naming can be seen as a tool for protection, individual identification, gaining political legitimacy and a political voice. Naming is thus not simply a superficial tactic, however if recognized only as a superficial tool (as it has in the Ladder District), the impact of naming is significantly reduced if not compromised altogether.

NAMING AND IMAGE

- Changing a neighborhood name provides an opportunity to ‘reinvent’ the neighborhood.
- Changing a neighborhood name is an attempt to change the image and perceptions associated with that neighborhood.

The literature made clear that naming could and would have an impact on the image of the city. This combined with my background in branding led me to approach the case studies with the expectation that a major part of neighborhood naming was about image and identity. What was unclear was the extent to which places had sought to deliberately manipulate image via the name change. All three cases clearly illustrated neighborhoods that had undergone (or were attempting to induce) a radical transformation, not only on the ground but also of their image.

NAMING AND BUILDING LOCAL IDENTITY

- If an existing neighborhood name does not reflect what is actually there (perhaps due to changes in uses or physical change in the area), a new name will allow the community to more accurately reflect the reality on the ground.

This first hypothesis concerns the case of neighborhood change that precedes naming, which was not a feature of any of the three case studies.

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- A new name can help distinguish or carve out a “sub”-neighborhood from a larger area when the proposed “sub-neighborhood” has a different identity than the larger neighborhood.

The Ladder District name was an attempt to carve out a part of Downtown Crossing to give it a more specific identity. The merchants and PR agents involved in the naming campaign had recognized the potential for a new neighborhood name to distinguish the area from its surroundings. But unfortunately those promoting the name failed to recognize role of the larger area in their pursuit of an individual identity, denying any relationship to it and contributing to the ultimate failure of the endeavor. Despite the outcome of the Ladder District effort, the point that naming can achieve such a goal remains.

- A new name can help create a collective identity and a sense of community when residents and businesses move into a previously unknown part of the city.

The intent of the Hudson Yards name is clearly tied to a desire to create the basis for a collective identity for future residents, however it is unclear what qualities might be associated with the name or what the collective identity might be. Meanwhile, in DUMBO the artists that arrived in the early 1970s unknowingly employed this tactic, most likely out of the basic need of locating themselves within the larger city.

NAMING, POWER AND LEGITIMACY

None of the cases endeavored to use naming as a political tool to the extent that colonial or communist nations had, however some elements of all three cases do point to the value of naming as a political tool.

- Naming allows a group of newcomers to a neighborhood to that area as their own.
- Naming is a tool that allows actors to legitimize and strengthen efforts intended to prompt neighborhood change, reinvestment and redevelopment.
- Changing a neighborhood name allows incoming residents to deny the existence of prior residents.

The Ladder District was clearly an example of newcomers seeking to stake a claim and define the identity of a neighborhood. Their approach to neighborhood naming also succeeded in alienating the existing neighborhood and constituents.

- Naming can give a community political legitimacy by facilitating the establishment of legitimizing bodies such as community organizations.

The DUMBO name, like many other neighborhood names, lent itself to the creation of a Neighborhood Association of the same name. In this way, the name gave an identity and a political

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voice to the residents and community members, allowing them to articulate common goals and create a shared political identity.

- Naming can exclude groups from being able to identify themselves with a neighborhood.
- Naming a neighborhood demoralizes existing tenants by denying the legitimacy of their presence or contribution to the identity of the area.
- Changing a neighborhood name is an act of aggression against the existing community.

. In its early stages, the naming scheme for Hudson Yards excluded the Hell's Kitchen community, although subsequent iterations reflected the existing communities. As such, it is not clear whether the initial intent was to deliberately exclude existing populations and diminish their political legitimacy by denying their existence. When the HKNA appropriated the name, they demonstrated the symbolic shift in power by insisting that the new name of the neighborhood include that of the existing community (i.e., Hell's Kitchen).

NAMING AND PROTECTION

- Naming is a mechanism for a neighborhood to protect itself from change and to preserve its identity.

Much like any other intervention, protection by the government requires clearly defined boundaries in order to delineate the limits of the area to be protected. Naming an area implies the existence of boundaries. As such, it should not have been surprising to find that in all three cases, naming was instrumental to the protection of a neighborhood. The simple act of placing a neighborhood on the Register of Historic Places automatically codifies the name, establishing the name as an official signifier for the neighborhood as recognized by the government. Such codification was pursued both in the Ladder District (for the Ladder Blocks) as well as in DUMBO. Applying zoning restrictions to an area via a special district designation achieves a similar objective, as evidenced in the Special Clinton District.

- Naming is a compromise which allows a neighborhood to memorialize its past while physical changes occur.
- Naming is a way to capitalize on the history and identity of a neighborhood, even while changes are occurring that eliminate all other traces of that identity.

It was interesting to observe that in DUMBO, preservation activists sought to attach a relatively new name, DUMBO, to preserve the memory and character of a place and of uses that pre-dated the name, of industrial uses from the 1800s and early 1900s. In this way, the neighborhood has bridged the two histories and identities of the neighborhood. Rather than memorializing the

neighborhood's past with a name from the past but engaging in physical changes, the DUMBO case introduces a new name to protect the physical traces of the neighborhood's history.

- Naming is a limiting factor in the reinvention and growth of a neighborhood. Codifying a neighborhood name restricts its potential in the future to evolve, grow, and redefine itself as needed. Naming is thus resisted by planners (or other actors) in those situations in which they wish to maintain flexibility and the ability to change.

The reluctance of the BRA and the New York City DCP to recognize and formalize neighborhood names in all three cases confirms this last hypothesis, wherein the formal codification of a neighborhood is avoided to preserve flexibility. Both city government and developers are more likely to reflect this approach (and thus eschew naming), whereas residents are those who will generally demand more protection (and therefore embrace naming as a tool).

NAMING AND HARNESSING RESOURCES

- Naming a neighborhood gives a community the visibility and legitimacy to demand (and get) city services (and other types of resources).
- An area seeking investment and other government “intervention” uses naming to delineate within which such interventions are intended to occur.

Similar to the discussion of protection, seeing as a name implies that a place has specific boundaries, it can thus create a context within which municipal (or other) resources can be focused. This was illustrated in DUMBO with the DigitalNYC initiative, wherein funds were funneled to tenants in select neighborhoods. Had DUMBO not already established itself as a place in the mind of the local development officers, the area would not have been chosen as one of the eleven neighborhoods to participate in the program.

In the Ladder District, despite requests from the merchants in the area for improved lighting, roadways and basic amenities, the City of Boston did not make any effort to improve their level of service or amenities in the neighborhood. I would argue that this reluctance was due to the fact that the area was not considered by the City as a place separate from the larger Downtown Crossing neighborhood or one that might warrant special attention, and this was due partially to the failure of the name to become entrenched as a neighborhood name.

Hudson Yards provides a contrasting experience to those of DUMBO and Hudson Yards. In the latter cases the names originated among non-municipal stakeholders and had to first establish themselves as neighborhood names in order to gain the political legitimacy required to access resources. Meanwhile, the Hudson Yards name originated in government and as such has not been

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saddled with such a burden of proof. In such a case, I propose that once as a government agency has attached a name to a place (whether it is officially codified or not), it is then able to funnel resources to that place. By engaging in the ULURP process, which in the case of Hudson Yards entails officially designating and naming the area where specific zoning and other government actions will occur, is an example of a formalized process which accomplishes the same objective.

NAMING AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

In both the Hudson Yards and DUMBO case studies, we see how the ability of both private and public actors to invent a new role and vision for the neighborhood in a new context allowed for the collective re-imagining of neighborhoods. The cognitive leap having been made, investors, tenants, and shoppers were willing to now consider derelict areas that had previously been on the fringe and not part of their consciousness.

- A new name indicates what the agenda/vision is for the future of an area.

In Hudson Yards, the new name was used as a catchphrase to refer to the City's larger vision for the area. The attempt to name the Ladder District also implied expectations for larger-scale revitalization, but was not enough to induce enough investment to realize the vision.

- Changing neighborhood names can induce development. Naming thus can 'lead' what might be happening in the private market.

In both the Ladder District and Hudson Yards, naming preceded most of the expected development – while we wait to see the outcome of Hudson Yards, the experience of the Ladder District suggests that naming a neighborhood is not enough to induce development on its own.

- Changing a neighborhood name can encourage people to consider new uses in that neighborhood, especially those that might be incompatible with existing conditions.

The desire to introduce a new name for the Ladder District also reflected the opinion that the old identity implied a character that was incompatible with their vision for an upscale entertainment district. As such, a new name was seen as a tactic to suggest new uses in the neighborhood.

- Neighborhoods use naming to attract attention to the fact that they have changed. Naming thus reflects what has happened already in the private market. Neighborhood naming can reinforce the physical and political changes that may have already occurred, or point to changes that might be underway.

DUMBO, meanwhile, was a case of the name signaling changes that had already occurred in the private market. The name was used to communicate the fact that the area had undergone a radical transformation, that new uses had found their way into the neighborhood, and that the area was

worthy of consideration. The formal adoption of the name by the community association and local businesses further reinforced the changes that had occurred.

REVISITING THE LITERATURE

CHORONOMASTICS

The literature of Choronomastics suggests that a name is a fundamental tool for indicating the existence and presence of a place – a way that a place can announce itself. This is most relevant to new neighborhoods, i.e. neighborhoods that have emerged in previously anonymous places, or perhaps neighborhoods that are carving themselves out of a larger part of the city. Following these theories, I had expected naming to focus on creating awareness of a place, specifically in cases where no neighborhood had ever existed. But in cities like New York and Boston with rich histories, few parts of the city are ever blank slates that require such an initial identification – rarely is naming used to establish the presence of a place – instead, a name is used to re-invent old neighborhoods or areas whose uses had become obsolete. Perhaps it is in these cases that the difference between “naming” and “re-naming” becomes significant, and points to an area where further study is warranted.

THE TOOLS OF GOVERNMENT– NAMING AS A SUBSET OF INFORMATION

The case studies indicate that the government does in deed consider naming a strategic tool, but one to be used sparingly. This was reflected in their reluctance in to engage in naming for fear of limiting the future neighborhood growth. At the same time, naming was clearly used by the government in Hudson Yards in a manner that is consistent with Vedung and van der Doelen’s “legitimizing” theory.

In the literature on the tools of government, the focus is largely on the government as an actor, with specific emphasis on both the tools available to the government and those that they make available to other actors. This entire thesis, however, suggests that the government is not the only actor that can use information as a tool, or pave the road for stronger interventions with a simple information strategy. In this context, we see that the legitimating theory has been appropriated by the market.

MARKETING AND BRANDING

My past experiences as a brand strategist predisposed me to expect a neighborhood name to be similar to a product name – a construct that is used simply to market a neighborhood, that requires

one “brand steward” that protects the integrity and symbols attached to the name. I also had assumed that a strong brand name could actually induce action, would allow the “product” to stand out from amidst the many other local neighborhoods.

The marketing literature emphasized that any effort, whether naming or advertising, should be but one important piece of a larger, holistic, strategic marketing and communications plan rather than ad-hoc promotional efforts. In two of the three cases, much consideration was given to the power of naming and its role in the larger promotional strategy, but with mixed results. The Ladder District focused only on the promotional aspect of marketing, eschewing a more strategic approach to revitalization and naming, and resulting in a failed attempt at revitalization via naming.

In contrast, DUMBO’s approach to marketing involved a multi-pronged strategy, both promotional – the use of PR, events, advertising; and strategic –targeting to particular tenants, accommodating artists and arts organizations, adhering to a high level of quality, thinking about the collection of buildings as a whole, and gaining the buy-in of other stakeholders. Their success is a testament to the validity of a strategic marketing approach.

Hudson Yards is still in the early stages of development and as such the majority of communications emanating from the DCP are related to the approval process for the proposed zoning changes. However, in naming the larger plan Hudson Yards as well as the proposed Special District, they have already begun to create the associations between the name and the larger vision for the area. In this sense they have leveraged the Hudson Yards plan as a strategic marketing document, one that will allow them to continue to promote both the idea of change in the neighborhood, the tools with which to encourage change, and the name which reflects the anticipated changes.

IMAGE AND IDENTITY

My expectations going into the case studies were that image would be of utmost importance to the subject of neighborhood naming, a view that was supported by the literature in Vale and Warner, Ashworth and Voogd, among others. However the case studies also indicated that image alone would might not be enough to lift a neighborhood – other tools must be brought to bear on a neighborhood in order to allow the envisioned image to develop successfully.

The extensive research on the construction of identity implied that place naming has a great impact on the identity of individuals in that neighborhood, suggesting that I would find a more emotional individual response to the notion of changing neighborhood names. However, this did

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not appear to be case in either DUMBO nor in the Ladder District, as there was little to indicate a sense of nostalgia or a desire to “protect” the names. In DUMBO there seemed to be more of a concern around protecting the physical traces than the nomenclature of the neighborhood, while in the Ladder District most people seemed nonchalant if not somewhat detached from the notion of renaming a part of Downtown Crossing.

In the case of Hell’s Kitchen/Hudson Yards there was evidence of a much stronger emotional response to naming, dating back to the initial move to change the name of Hell’s Kitchen to Clinton. Proponents of each name remain today, each equally adamant in claiming that “their” name is the one accurate reflection of the image and history of the neighborhood. With the introduction of the Hudson Yards name, the community response reflected the already strong emotional ties to the existing name(s), manifested in the HKNA’s insistence that the Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood name be incorporated in later iterations of the plan.

One explanation of the difference between the Hudson Yards experience and that in the other two case studies is likely tied to the relative age of the neighborhood names under threat, i.e. that only a name that has been entrenched for a long (over thirty?) years can evoke an emotional response. In the case of the Ladder District, the name that was to be replaced, Downtown Crossing, had only been in existence for twenty years, evidently not long enough to prompt an emotional response from the community. In DUMBO, Fulton Landing (the name replaced by DUMBO) no longer had any residents or constituents to protest the loss of the name. An alternative theory is that when the neighborhood name is only threatened in part of the neighborhood, the fact that the name will not be completely eliminated diminishes the emotional response to its replacement. In both DUMBO and the Ladder District, the new names were to apply to only a part of the old neighborhood, leaving the “old” name intact in another part of the city.

The literature also implied that the success of the name would be predicated on the ability to conjure a single, coherent identity – a precondition that seemed to be in conflict with the inherent complexity of neighborhoods, where it becomes more difficult to accommodate the individual interpretations of identity. In the case studies it appears that a collective identity is reflected via neighborhood associations and community groups. For example, the DUMBO case clearly demonstrates that a neighborhood name could communicate a multitude of elements.

Again, this may only become possible with time – as such, newly coined neighborhood names are at a severe disadvantage with respect to those who have been languishing in the background as nicknames. In the case of DUMBO, the neighborhood had over twenty years to build a history and

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associations that would allow the rich layering of imagery that it enjoys today. For Hudson Yards, the name might be evocative enough of the history of the rail yards and local industry that it might be able to appropriate such imagery in constructing an identity. Alternatively, perhaps the impending fight over the Stadium Plan will result in immediate historical significance and the generation of a strong identity, much like Greenwich Village and Washington Square in their fight to save the neighborhood from urban renewal and Robert Moses.

With respect to the discussion of the role of naming and the construction of political identity, I anticipated that naming would have been leveraged and appropriated as a tool to reflect political agendas to a greater extent than was demonstrated in the case studies. It appears that those with a political agenda have not sought to use naming as such, or perhaps more optimistically, they recognize the manipulative nature of such strategies. Thomas Blom Hansen had also warned of the difficulties of generating a stable sense of community and identity, given the multiple meanings and complexity of an entity such as a neighborhood. Thus, I expected that attempts at naming would regularly fail, due to the impossibility of finding a name that reflects the many interests and stakeholders in a community. However, this did not seem to be a factor in the relative success or failure

SUMMARY OF THE CASE STUDIES

DUMBO

DUMBO has been adopted by residents, realtors, commercial tenants, retailers, the press, city planners and elected officials, an indication that the establishment of DUMBO as a neighborhood name has been successful. The name has been used as the identifier for the neighborhood in the State Register of Historic Places, as well as for numerous community organizations. The Department of City Planning has embraced the name, and community planners have been using it consistently in municipal documents.

As the popularity of the name has grown, the transformation of the neighborhood has accelerated. The shift from an abandoned, derelict and unknown area to a vibrant, revitalized, and very well known community began in earnest in 1997, and new development and conversions continue apace. It must be noted, however, that this 'success' occurs close to 30 years after the name DUMBO was first coined. The challenge of attracting people to the area remained even once the city had approved the proposals to convert the existing building stock to residential and commercial uses. Even though the area had long been a residential community of creative industries

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and artists, the image of the neighborhood remained that of an abandoned, derelict area. In this regard, the name was a key mechanism that drew attention to the neighborhood, communicated the change in identity and image, and ultimately fuelled its growth.

DUMBO also illustrates several elements that facilitate and encourage the acceptance of the name by outsiders. The existence of strong boundaries, in this case the bridges, the BQE and the river, finally worked in favor of the neighborhood. The imageability of the neighborhood was enhanced by these boundaries, allowing people to immediately conjure a mental map of the area.

A second advantage was the fact that a large portion of the neighborhood was owned and controlled by one (very savvy) developer. This allowed Two Trees to take a longer-term view and to think strategically about the development of the neighborhood, given that they had much more at stake than those who might have only one building in an area. This fact also allowed them to be very strategic about selecting tenants in order to cultivate a specific atmosphere and image. Two Trees also worked tirelessly to promote the neighborhood at every juncture, and leveraged the unique nature of the name to 'rise above the clutter' in the media. They were ubiquitous and generous with their PR, but also knew how to present an interesting story that would capture the attention of their target markets.

Finally, the slow and long growth of the original DUMBO community contributed to the authenticity of the naming and of the image presented by Two Trees in the media. Cultural organizations had appropriated the DUMBO name before Two Trees even began to convert their properties, which provided an added degree of legitimacy to the identity once it became more explicitly marketed. These organizations were evidence that a community already existed, visible to even the greatest skeptics.

THE LADDER DISTRICT

In contrast to the success of DUMBO, the Ladder District was a failed attempt at neighborhood naming and at best a temporary marketing scheme to draw attention to a few properties in a quiet section of Downtown Crossing. Besides generating interest among select members of the press and a narrow segment of the population, the naming campaign did not have the wide-ranging effect necessary to truly induce wholesale adoption of the name.

Multiple factors contributed to the failure of the name. The name and image was 'owned' by one group of stakeholders (the restaurant and bar owners and their public relations representatives) and their narrowly defined identity of the neighborhood was irrelevant to the other area stakeholders.

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As a result, they were unable to conceive of the Ladder District identity within the existing context of the already established Downtown Crossing neighborhood. Their inability to acknowledge and embrace the existing community prevented a more wide-spread acceptance of the name. An absence of support or acknowledgement from the municipality added to the perceptions that this ‘neighborhood’ was a mere construct of a select group of businesses targeted to a small segment of the population.

Added to these missteps were the lack of discernable boundaries or physical distinctions between the Ladder District and neighboring areas, and the fact that the name referred to a physical feature that was not apparent unless you happened to look at the neighborhood from an aerial perspective. Finally, the timeframe in which the new name was introduced and expected to take hold was extremely short, clearly designed to achieve only one objective – to generate interest and short-term ‘buzz.’ While this may have proved successful for the opening of the businesses in the Ladder District, such a strategy conflicted with any larger vision for longer-term reinvestment and neighborhood revitalization.

There is always the chance that over the long-term the name may gain traction, but in order for that to occur the difficulties outlined above will have to be addressed. In the meantime, even those who helped coin the term continue to support other names (i.e. Downtown Crossing), blurring any distinctions the Ladder District might have created. The refurbishment of the Boston Opera House around the corner introduces another competing name: the Theatre District. This name offers stronger imagery than the Ladder District, is appealing to a wider audience and refers to a wider range of related amenities, attractions and institutions. As such, prospects for the neighborhood to become known as the Theatre District are much stronger than those for the Ladder District.

HUDSON YARDS

It remains to be seen whether the Hudson Yards name will take hold as a neighborhood name for the entire 40-block area proposed in the zoning plan. I believe that the name will take hold in the areas that are currently without an identity, i.e. a much smaller section of the special district than currently proposed. The most significant feature of this case is the presence of strong neighborhoods within the proposed Hudson Yards neighborhood, many of which will continue to be recognized under the city plan with ‘sub-district’ designations that preserve the name (as well as the distinct building styles). Furthermore, the proposed zoning accommodates and dictates a variety

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of styles, uses and amenities throughout the special district, however this also diminishes the likelihood that a single, discernable identity for the entire area will emerge.

For these reasons, I believe that the Hudson Yards name can only be expected to represent a smaller piece of the proposed Special District. Several features will influence the likelihood of adoption of the Hudson Yards as a neighborhood name for a sub-portion of the special district. Unlike DUMBO, with its unifying aesthetic as well as its relatively rich history (thirty years to Hudson Yards' half), Hudson Yards will likely have to depend on more artificial identity elements in its initial stages to bolster the sense of a coherent identity. The establishment of a consistent character is one strategy for achieving this, both in terms of urban design as well as the type of uses contained therein. Ideally this character will be distinctive from other areas of Manhattan, one that engenders a palatable sense of place. This is not to advocate a homogeneous, fabricated environment of matching planters, lampposts and street signs, however, sensitivity to certain unifying elements and a philosophy of building part of a larger community must permeate both public and private initiatives. If the final development above the rail yards is more of a mixed use nature than a Stadium, the name might apply to that area, given that those are the "Yards".

In the event that a stadium does get built over the rail yards, it is likely that the neighborhood will become associated with the name of the stadium, and Hudson Yards will be relegated to a different area.

VII. Conclusion

Simply by using the power of suggestion, a name can galvanize a community to visualize a future for the neighborhood. By changing the image of the neighborhood through naming, the perception of what uses are feasible in the neighborhood change as well. The challenge, however, is to maintain enough authenticity to stay true to the name, and to develop a depth of identity that supports the image. Furthermore, a new name it is highly unlikely to be accepted if there is little evidence of change, reinvestment and/or development to warrant the name change.

The case studies I have presented in this thesis illustrate the power as well as the limits of naming as a tool for planning and development. In all three cases naming has been employed by diverse interest groups in an attempt to change the image and development prospects of a neighborhood. The experience in DUMBO shows the potential that such a tactic might hold, while the Ladder District illustrates the limitations of such a strategy. Given the many factors involved in spurring revitalization, a direct causal link between naming and development is difficult to uncover however I have become convinced that naming can and does help spur neighborhood reinvestment.

In brief, I have determined that naming is a valuable tool for a neighborhood that seeks to spur revitalization. Used within the guidelines discussed below, naming can:

- Indicate that development isn't just a one-off, one-building change, but rather, part of a whole scale revitalization.
- Help set the stage for further action
- Accelerate changes that might have occurred on their own or at a slower pace.
- Change a neighborhood's image
- Introduce new uses/incongruous uses within existing conditions.
- Encourage people to reconsider the place as something different than they knew.
- Shape/direct the future of a neighborhood – through the power of suggestion
- Offer a vision for the future
- Legitimize certain claims on the neighborhood
- De-legitimize other claims on the neighborhood

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NAMING NEIGHBORHOODS

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL?

- Support of multiple groups of stakeholders – community, government, business interests
- Resolution of conflict with potential competing names – whether by incorporation into “new” name, or by the creation of sub-districts
- Consistent use of the name
- Sustained reinvestment and development
- Visible change – evidence of above-mentioned reinvestment
- Combination with other tools – naming alone will not provoke revitalization
- Time – adoption of a name, like so many other changes, takes time

Naming a neighborhood is a valuable tool for planners, developers, and communities who seek to catalyze change in a given area. But naming can not be used in isolation – there are several preconditions as well as accompanying features that must be present to ensure that the name “sticks” and that it will have the desired effect (i.e. induce revitalization) on the area. Naming can not occur in a vacuum – it must be accompanied by sustained levels of investment that reflect the realization of the vision that prompted the introduction of the new name. Furthermore, the images evoked by the name must reflect what is present on the ground – simply claiming that the neighborhood has changed will not make it so.

To ensure that the name becomes entrenched in the vernacular, it must be embraced by (and a reflection of) as many groups of stakeholders as possible. A name that is not recognized by certain groups in the community and naming campaign that deliberately excludes stakeholders will see limited success and adoption rates.

In cases in which a new name is proposed to replace an existing name, there are additional layers of complexity that require sensitivity to existing populations and interests. Given the experiences of both the Hudson Yards and the Ladder District, it would be ill-advised to attempt to completely ignore the existence of an existing identity, even if the solution is at the expense of popular adoption of the new name. Gaining the support of other stakeholders may require resolving the existence of conflicting names and identities, which in any case is essential to the long-term success and adoption of the name. This may be achieved by the creation of a series of sub-districts, as seen in Hudson Yards, or simply by supporting larger efforts to celebrate the history and legacy of the neighborhood.

In the case of Hudson Yards, the city recognized this and chose instead to create a series of “sub-neighborhoods” that incorporate the pre-existing identities within the larger framework of the “new” neighborhood. However, this compromise will likely negatively impact the successful adoption of the name Hudson Yards as the dominant name in the sub-districts. By retaining the Hell’s Kitchen name, for example, the city is legitimizing and codifying the existence of that particular neighborhood and its identity as well. Because of its strong identity and imagery, the public will be more likely to identify with the name Hell’s Kitchen, ensuring its entrenchment as a neighborhood name. As such, I expect the Hudson Yards name will become associated with a much smaller sub-neighborhood of the Special District itself, such as the area created by the decking-over of the railroads. At the same time, the Hudson Yards name has strong potential to become more generally associated with the entire district, in the same way that the Upper East Side often evokes a collection of neighborhoods north of 59th Street on the East Side. This strategy reflects the city’s acceptance of the reality of place-identities in the city and that the neighborhood identity is one of many layers of identities associated with a place, each identity corresponding to a different scale.

The Ladder District offers a direct contrast to the Hudson Yards experience. The individualistic and non-inclusive approach to the naming of the neighborhood was marked by a lack of community participation in the initiative. Furthermore, no effort was made to accommodate or acknowledge the pre-existing identity of Downtown Crossing. Rather than attempt to create the Ladder District as a sub-district within the already existing Downtown Crossing neighborhood, the neighborhood name referenced an obscure image, that of the Ladder Blocks, while deliberately avoiding any mention of Downtown Crossing. The proponents of the Ladder District thus alienated the populations in the area by denying the legitimacy of the Downtown Crossing community.

Generating the widespread acceptance and awareness necessary to entrench a name in the collective imagery of the city requires consistent, constant use of the name, through many media and in many fora, over an extended period of time. Consistent use of a neighborhood name by ‘official’ bodies and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, is a recommended strategy for popularizing and disseminating a name. This includes ensuring that city agencies incorporate the name into day-to-day operations, signage, and official communications.

Finally, as a tool for effecting long-term change, naming can not be seen as a “quick-fix” for a neighborhood, nor can it be the only tactic employed in any revitalization plan. Leveraging other

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tools will be fundamental to ensuring the success of any growth plan, however, naming can be a valuable tool in facilitating the use of many others. These may include the use of incentives, regulation, legislation, and plain old marketing.

WHAT ELSE IS NICE TO HAVE?

In addition to the above imperatives, there are additional conditions and actions that will strengthen any attempt to introduce a new name. These include:

- o Generous amounts of press coverage / PR
- o Name that has a connection to history of the neighborhood, or that reflects what currently occupies the neighborhood
- o Community groups/associations that use the name
- o Clear, distinguishable boundaries
- o Opportunities and support for codification –via Zoning, Listing, or some other mechanism.
- o Control over a large portion of land/property

None of these are imperatives to the success of the naming, however, they do improve the likelihood that a name will both be adopted and provoke redevelopment. For the most part they facilitate the adoption and entrenchment of the name by adding several degrees of authenticity to the name.

Distinct physical boundaries are not necessary for the introduction of a neighborhood name, however if there are no distinguishable boundaries, it is essential that there be some indication why the neighborhood is distinct from surrounding areas – whether a palpable change in building style, uses, building materials, or urban design elements (cobblestone streets, for example).

If a clear physical distinction is not present, the rationale for a separate name is less evident, rendering a naming strategy that much more difficult to implement. At the same time, I recommend against setting immutable boundaries, given the propensity of neighborhood boundaries to shift over time with the natural evolution of a community.

Finally, simply demarcating boundaries on a map will not result in the effective implementation of a neighborhood name. One does not interpret or create a lasting image of the city from a plan view – one experiences the city as a pedestrian, and as such, maps are at best diagrammatic representations but fare poorly as tools to convey identity and image. One of the major flaws of the Ladder District attempt is that the name is based on a feature that is evident only to those that look at a map.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE? There are three situations in which naming a neighborhood might particularly occur.

In the case of a neighborhood like DUMBO in the early 1970s, one that has no identity, is abandoned and not considered a neighborhood unto itself, introducing a new name is a valuable and effective tool. However it must be complemented by additional tactics aimed at encouraging revitalization. These can be a collection of initiatives from both the public and private sector that demonstrate the opportunities and potential of the area including zoning and regulatory changes, financial incentives, and commitments to the improvement of the physical realm.

A second situation is one in which there is already an existing population in the area. In such cases, the most successful naming initiatives are those that embrace those entrenched communities and reflect their existence, rather than ignore and attempt to overlook them. Introducing a name that denies their presence will fail to gain the widespread stakeholder support necessary for a successful naming campaign. This was again evident in DUMBO, where an early attempt to name the neighborhood Fulton Landing was poorly received. The name was tied to a proposed development that would have eliminated the existing community and ignored the unique atmosphere of the neighborhood – and thus failed to gain the support of existing tenants and residents. When the developers returned to the neighborhood with a proposal that accommodated the existing community and embraced the character of DUMBO, their proposal kept the name DUMBO, was met with approval and gained the endorsement of the community.

Finally, if there is already an existing neighborhood name, re-naming becomes a more complicated proposition, but is still possible. One strategy is to adopt a hierarchy of names, with the new or proposed neighborhood name designating itself a sub-district or neighborhood ‘within’ a certain district. It would be unwise to ignore existing names, especially if they are in popular use and have strong associations. However, it is feasible to suggest a layered identity – many neighborhoods have several names that correspond to the varying scales and degrees of familiarity and specificity. In this way, the heritage or unique qualities of a specific sub-area can be acknowledged without ignoring and discrediting the character that holds significance for other groups. The compromise reached in Hudson Yards is an example of one manner of incorporating a neighborhood name within a larger framework. Had the Ladder District incorporated Downtown Crossing into its identity, they may have enjoyed more widespread acceptance and adoption.

NEIGHBORHOOD SIZE: This study was not comprehensive enough to allow a definitive statement on the ideal size of a neighborhood with respect to naming.

More important than size is the presence of distinct boundaries, as discussed below. However, it does appear as though Hudson Yards as proposed might be too big – I envision that select areas will become associated with the Hudson Yards name, particularly those nearest to the rail yards (and lacking an identity). But others, especially those that correspond to well-known sub-district names, will be less likely to adopt the Hudson Yards name. This does not preclude many of the sub-districts/neighborhoods to from employing Hudson Yards as a more general area designation, much as neighborhoods do in New York’s Upper West Side.

The Ladder District was a fairly small area, but I do not believe that the relatively small neighborhood size was a contributing factor to the failure of the name to take hold. DUMBO is fairly small and self-contained as well, but this if anything might have contributed to the success of the name – within its compact grid lies a walkable neighborhood with a variety of landmarks, nodes and paths that contribute to the overall imageability of the neighborhood .

TIMEFRAME: The attempt at naming the ladder district illustrates how approaching naming as a short-term strategy is very short-sighted and ill-advised. While it may succeed in drawing attention very briefly to some new businesses, such a strategy is untenable for long-term sustainability and will prevent an area from gaining enough attention to allow the introduction and implementation of long-term revitalization schemes.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Many areas remain unexplored with respect to neighborhood naming – as I hope I illustrated in the literature review, very little research has been done with regards to the use of naming as a tool. As such, a wealth of opportunity remains for additional research on this topic. Future studies might look to examine the differences between naming and re-naming as well as many of the theories posited in the introductory chapters of this thesis. A more in-depth investigation of the time factor of naming, i.e. how long a name has been in place, might shed additional light on how naming can be used to effect change in a neighborhood. Finally, this thesis has focused on the experience in North American cities. Additional research on the phenomena in other cities around the world might provide additional insights to the experience here.

Like many other tools, naming cannot be used in isolation – its success depends on the ability of other actors to employ simultaneous mechanisms to ensure that changes do not occur only in word but also in deed. Despite the many sources and reasons for naming, there is one factor above all that must be considered – that a name, whether for a new neighborhood or an existing neighborhood, has the greatest chance of survival and adoption when embraced by all constituents and stakeholders – residents, businesses, government, and visitors. A name can thus be seen as a compromise in the inevitable evolution of a city – a way to celebrate and remember the past while physical changes occur, or a way to capitalize on the history and identity of a neighborhood, even while eliminating all that allowed this identity to flourish.

Neighborhood naming can thus be considered a valuable tool of planning and development, one of many in the toolboxes of the developer, the community, and the municipality, in the never-ending challenges facing the revitalization and growth of cities.

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Appendix I: Catalog of Re-named Neighborhoods

Catalog of responses to email inquiry to H-Urban Listserv, May-June 2004.

City	Old Name / Previously Known As	New Name	Notes
Beirut	A southern suburb	Dahiye (Arabic word for suburb)	renaming associated with the political and social construction of the Shi'a community...this name has become 'normalized' as it is now used as an administrative category
Boston	West End	Charles River Place	
	West End	Beacon Hill	Historically, the West End had extended up the back slope of Beacon Hill to Revere St. People in that neighborhood now describe that area as Beacon Hill. Realtors
	Charles River Place	West End	Started showing up on maps. New apartment building called West End Place (completed in 1998), Lots of former West Enders live there.
	Nearest catholic Parish	Parish name	Realtors advertise houses for sale by the name of the nearest Catholic parish, as in a two family house in St. Peter's parish
Cardiff, Wales	Butetown	Tigerbay	Known officially as Butetown, after the Marques of Bute who built Cardiff's docks, is also referred to as Tiger Bay. Locals however still dispute the exact location of Tiger Bay, which for most is limited to only a few streets. In spite of the neighborhood having been demolished and rebuilt in the early 70's, this territorial division still exists.
	Tyneside Quay	Adventurers Quay	Regeneration of the Cardiff Docklands
	Ely Fields	Marques Court	Residential developers.
Charleston, SC	West of the Ashely River district	West Ashley	Seen by old-timers "as a vulgar contemporary corruption of a traditional name for the district that dates back centuries." Real estate agents and new arrivals to the area in the 1970s or 1980s Has come into broad use....as a whole generation of people have been born and raised there since the "corruption" began to take hold...the term "West Ashley" now appears on the City of Charleston's official neighborhood map as the district label.
Chicago	???	75 officially designated Community Areas	constructed products of the Chicago School of Sociology during the interwar decades (1920s)

City	Old Name / Previously Known As	New Name	Notes
	South Chicago Heights	Ford Heights	
	Maxwell Street south of University of Illinois at Chicago Campus	University Village	Repositioning of the area (west of the Loop and the former grounds of the Maxwell Street market)... still hotly contested.
	Woodlawn	South Campus	Directly south of the University of Chicago to the name of South Campus. Isn't catching on that well, but it appears from time to time in real estate listings.
	South Lawndale	Little Village	Mid-1960s, the local Chamber of Commerce spearheaded an effort to change the popular designation of the area to disassociate South Lawndale from North Lawndale, which had become inhabited by African Americans, many of them poor southern migrants, over the previous decade.
	"Edgewater" area of "Uptown"	Edgewater (as a separate community area)	Residents, in an effort to distinguish itself from the crowded and seedy Uptown area. Edgewater residents were also successful; a major signal of the success of this effort was the creation of a separate public library for the neighborhood.
Cincinnati	Over-The-Rhine, Mt. Auburn and Walnut Hills areas	Uptown	Pushed by developers who were trying to redevelop these older neighborhoods which had slipped economically and whose racial demographics had changed from German to Afro-American. Signage was erected, new letterheads ordered, and quite a bit of money spent to accomplish this goal. Failed.
	East End	Columbia- Tusculum	
	Bond Hill, Elmwood Place, Carthage, and Roselawn	Seymour	Cincinnati's 1948 Master Plan: adjacent but historically distinct neighborhoods were lumped together and called by wholly new and fictional names... reflect a strategic planning motivation to identify "neighborhoods" as legacies of past settlement, and "communities" as those rationally defined areas around which future investment and planning should be organized.
Detroit	????	Midtown Detroit	Marketing
	East Detroit	Eastpointe	To gain some association with the upscale Grosse Pointe communities east of the City of Detroit rather than the "negative" association with Detroit.
	Cass Corridor	Midtown	To eliminate a name associated with drugs, prostitution
Hartford	???	Charter Oak – Zion	Referred to the Charter Oak housing project (which has since been demolished) as well as to Zion street -- once

Appendix

City	Old Name / Previously Known As	New Name	Notes
			appeared on official city maps
	Charter Oak - Zion	Behind the Rocks	Officially renamed about 10 years ago, to remove a reference to a notoriously crime-ridden housing project ... new name had been in fairly common public usage even before the official change...refers to the cliffs that form the area's eastern boundary
	North End	Uptown	
LA	South-Central LA	South LA	City made an official switch to shed the former name's stigma of gang activity, inter-racial tension, and violence.
	Van Nuys	Lake Balboa	
	Sepulveda	North Hills	
	Canoga Park	West Hills (partly)	
	Lankershim	North Hollywood	
	North Hollywood	Valley Village (partly)	Real estate agents started referring to Valley Village in the late 1980s. For the cachet. Done purely for psychological reasons (and for the projected or imagined effect on land values)
	North Hollywood	NoHo (partly)	
	Van Nuys/ North Hollywood	Valley Glen (partly)	
Louisville	West End	West Louisville	Black leaders and some academics don't like using West End because it is seen as a negative term. "End" meaning finished or dead. Leaders have asked to refer to this section as "West Louisville" but oddly the government keeps on using the phrase "West End"
	Village West	City View Park	(A large apartment complex of 600 units that was recently revitalized) Village West was associated with drugs, prostitution and gangs. The word village also was seen as negative--small, uneducated and third world. Now it is a viable neighborhood of poor working families.
	???	Pioneer Park	Neighborhood we worked in to renovate or build new housing -- Pioneer calling on African Americans to be pioneers to be the first to come back and live. It worked very well -- that is what residents call it now.
Miami	Southern section of Miami Beach	SOBE	Result of a marketing drive in the 1990s to promote the area based on the successes of the historic preservation efforts of the 1980s.
	Miami beach to 23 rd St.	South Beach (today)	tracking the boundaries of the National Register Miami Beach Architectural District, popularly known as the Art

Appendix

City	Old Name / Previously Known As	New Name	Notes
			Deco District
	Area south of 5 th Street	South Pointe / South of 5 th / SOFI	Sub-neighborhood of South Beach... not by the people who actually live there
	South Beach Sub-neighborhoods	Flamingo Park, Lincoln Road, and the Museum District	These neighborhood names and "boundaries" also track the creation of local historic districts from 1986-2004 after the creation of the National Register District in 1979
Milwaukee		Walnut Hill	Neighborhood Vote
		Washington Park	Neighborhood Vote
		Metcalfe Park	Committee in the area
	Neighborhood on the NW side	Granville Crossing	Efforts to turn around a stigmatized area resulted in renaming a neighborhood on the Northwest side. The area had been stigmatized by a poorly run condo complex
Minneapolis	???	Uptown	A group of business leaders in the late 1920s attempted to name the area in allusion to the Uptown area of Chicago...only loosely caught on, and it was not until the early 1980s that it stuck...not a defined neighborhood recognized by the city, although Uptown is a name readily recognized by most Minneapolis-Saint Paul residents as a specific part of the city.
	Uptown	CARAG (within uptown)	A defined neighborhood recognized by the city
	CARAG	Wellstone (under consideration)	In honor of the late Senator Wellstone
Nashville	South of Broadway area	SoBro	The mayor and planning commission, who have in recent years become very attracted to the tenets of new urbanism, want to encourage more residential and retail space etc. It's not really a neighborhood per se...very few people live there, but there is momentum to change that. Currently a wasteland of tilt-up metal warehouses, auto shops, and porn shops...a couple of small residential nodes ...
New Orleans	Area upriver from Canal St	Irish Channel	After Irish immigrants who made their home there in the 19th century.
	Area upriver from Canal Street	Garden District	American merchants built their mansions, also in the 19th century. "No matter where your house was -- if your name was in the police reports you were from the Irish Channel --

City	Old Name / Previously Known As	New Name	Notes
			if your name was on the society page you were from the Garden District."
New York City	Fifth Avenue between 90th and 92nd Streets	Prospect Hill	RR promoters who sought to attract passengers
	Prospect Hill	Carnegie Hill	1903 the first use of the term "Carnegie Hill" appears as the Carnegie Hill Hotel
	????	SoHo	Invented by Chester Rapkin in a report for the planning commission (or the urban renewal administration) about the area
	Hell's Kitchen	Clinton	
	Lower SoHo	LoSo	
	Gowanus	Boerum Hill	
	Lower East Side	Loisaida	Spanglish for "Lower East Side," as well as the City's official name for the neighborhood around Avenues C and D east of Tompkins Square.
	Lower East Side / Coop Village	Corlears Hook	Posters to the Co-Op Community Forum (located deep on the Lower East Side) have engaged in a three-month debate about what to call their neighborhood. TAB - triangle between the bridges SoBo - South Broome SoSo - South Soho BelDel - Below Delancey BBV - between Baruch and Vladek FDR Drive Left Side The Far East Upper Madison - "to be confused with Upper Madison" Little Willie Consensus appears to be forming around Corlears Hook, a 19th century name for the neighborhood. A point in its favor: it's already got a website.
Northern VA	Northern Virginia suburbs of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Vienna, etc	NoVa	Grew in popularity as the Virginia suburbs of Washington DC grew...NoVa refers to not only the, but also it has come to mean a certain kind of lifestyle: of huge houses sitting on top of one another, of strip malls and of mammoth SUV's.
	Southern VA / Tidewater region	SoVa	SoVa is more of a copy-cat title, and doesn't have a comprehensive identity as of yet
Philadelphia	West	University City	To distinguish the "University City" part of West

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	Philadelphia		Philadelphia from the whole of West Philadelphia
Phoenix, AZ	Squaw Peak	Piestewa Peak	in honor of a fallen soldier (a Hopi Indian woman killed in Iraq)...first pushed by a local newspaper editorial writer.
Portland, OR	Northwest Triangle/ Northwest Warehouse District	Pearl District	trendy edge-of-downtown condo and gallery district
San Francisco	Eureka Valley	Castro Village (now Castro district)	A deliberate campaign by some new local merchants, mostly gay, as the demographics shifted to gay in the 1970s. Their chosen name was actually Castro Village, presumably to invoke Greenwich Village, but the Village part was dropped in usage.
	northeast section of the Mission district	NEIMA (for North East Inner Mission Area) or Mission Arts and Media Gulch	attempt to create a new identity ...names have not caught on.
St. Louis	Dogtown	Clayton-Hanley Dogtown	Community Development Agency put out a map Urban legend
Toronto	????	Kensington District	Nominated for national historic district
	Bloor Street	Bloorcourt Village, Bloordale Village	business improvement areas...to give their commercial strip an identity...few residents of the areas adjacent to these strips refer to their neighborhood using those terms.
	Don Vale	Cabbagetown	Real estate agents in the early 1980s reclaimed the name from neighborhood south Don Vale...Cabbagetown was gentrification
	Cabbagetown	<i>torn down</i>	1940s...area torn down for public housing...Cabbagetown still used as a pejorative reference to the area's low income inhabitants
	The Annex	Lower Annex (expansion)	Neighborhood name creep (expansion of 'trendy' neighborhoods)
	The Beaches	Upper Beaches	
Wash. D.C.	Anacostia	Uniontown	
	Uniontown	Anacostia	Act of congress

City	Old Name / Previously Known As	New Name	Notes
	Central DC	Capitol Hill	Real Estate agents; Historic District created in the mid-1970s, (fixed and "shrunk" the boundaries of Capitol Hill to be coterminous with the Historic District)
	Jenkins Hill	Capitol Hill	
	Alexandria	Old Town Alexandria	Historic preservation movement.
	East of 16th St.	East Dupont.	
	Glover Park and Burlieith	North Georgetown	North added to Georgetown, other desirable neighborhoods by residents of nearby neighborhoods
	Trinidad neighborhood	North Capitol Hill	Some newcomers into the neighborhood...
	Navy Yard	Capitol Hill	Real Estate Agents; both Navy Yard and Lincoln Park are within the Capitol Hill Historic District
	Lincoln Park	Capitol Hill	Real Estate Agents; both Navy Yard and Lincoln Park are within the Capitol Hill Historic District
	North of Massachusetts Ave.	NoMa	North of Massachusetts Ave.
	South of Florida Avenue	SoFlo	Real estate agents are pushing
	south of H Street	SoHo	Real estate Agents are pushing
	Buzzard Point	Riverside	developers