An Examination of the Use of Urban Entertainment Centers as a Catalyst for Downtown Revitalization

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Abstract

This paper presents an examination of the use of urban entertainment centers as a catalyst for downtown revitalization. To provide context, the examination begins with an overview of the history of downtown in America, the reasons for its decline, and past attempts at renewal and revitalization. The discussion of urban entertainment centers includes a definition of the trend and the issues surrounding their use and success or failure. Two cities, Baltimore and Denver, are presented as examples of the urban entertainment center trend in America.

Keywords: downtown, revitalization, urban, entertainment, retail

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1.0   Introduction

"Downtown- where all the lights are bright" may be lyrics in the popular 1960's Petula Clark song, but they are ironic considering the song reached its popularity just as the lights were dimming on many downtowns across the country. In another decade, downtowns sat in ruins of their former glory.

As politicians, civic leaders, and the few remaining business and residents who remained downtown tried creative endeavors to renew the old center of the city; those who left for the suburbs shifted their thinking about the city as well. Downtown had become desolate, crime-ridden, and often dangerous, especially at night. Once fashionable neighborhoods lay in decay and the old bustling shopping districts became home to the homeless, gangs, and drug addicts. It seemed like an impossible situation.

This paper presents an examination of one method used by cities to revitalize downtown, beginning with a brief history of downtown, including background on other revitalization and urban renewal programs and economic stimulants that are related to urban entertainment centers.   In addition, this paper presents a definition of the urban entertainment center and how it differs from other attempts at renewal in terms of definition and goals. Baltimore, Maryland and Denver, Colorado are two cities that have used urban entertainment with varying degrees of success, and this paper discusses each of them.

Finally, this paper presents an examination of some of the specific issues associated with building and maintaining urban entertainment centers, and concludes with a discussion of their effectiveness to be a catalyst for downtown revitalization.

2.0   History

American downtowns were not always is need of revitalization. From the colonization of America until the early 20th century, cities bustled with activity; the influx of immigrants, and the downtown district stood as the center of business, religion, and politics. However, the 20th century brought many changes. New technologies, such as streetcars, made possible the ability to live, work, and play in areas once thought too far from one another and from downtown. Following World War II, the Federal Housing Administration insurance program, which protected banks against mortgage default, VA loans to war veterans, and the availability of affordable transportation coalesced and creation of the suburbs

began in earnest. In addition to the increased housing and transportation options, the end of segregation in the 1950s and the uncertain political climate of the 1960s expanded suburban development. This resulted in a fleeing of white residents from the city to the suburbs, in part provoked by the fear invoked from the real estate industry, whose unscrupulous blockbusting methods warned of declining property values, and convinced homeowners to sell their city homes and buy in the suburbs.[1] As white residents fled, middle class black residents also left the city for the suburbs, which eventually resulted in a city left with a disproportionately high percentage of poor mostly black lower income people.

As the suburbs grew and the city population shrank throughout the 1960s, the 1970s saw suburban population exceed that of the cities,[2] which resulted in a metropolitan areas dominated by the suburbs. Geographers eventually characterized the heavily populated suburbs that surrounded the low population city centers as a 'doughnut effect,' and population density maps showed rings around many cities, mostly mimicking the circular roadways, or beltways.[3] Table 1 shows the difference between the decline of the population of the city and the rise of population of the metropolitan area, which reflects the dominance of suburban population.[4]

Table 1: City and Metropolitan Area Population Comparisons

1950		1990	
Largest City	**Largest Metro Area**	**Largest City**	**Largest Metro Area***
New York	New York	New York	NY-NJ-Long Island
Chicago	Chicago	Los Angeles	L.A.-Anaheim-Riverside
Philadelphia	Los Angeles	Chicago	Chicago-Gary
Los Angeles	Philadelphia	Houston	San Francisco-Oakland
Detroit	Detroit	Philadelphia	Philadelphia-Wilmington
Baltimore	Boston	San Diego	Detroit-Ann Arbor
Cleveland	San Francisco	Detroit	Boston-Lawrence
St. Louis	Pittsburgh	Dallas	Washington, D.C.
Washington, D.C.	St. Louis	Phoenix	Dallas-Fort Worth
Boston	Cleveland	San Antonio	Houston-Galveston
San Francisco	Washington, D.C.	San Jose	Miami-Fort Lauderdale
Pittsburgh	Baltimore	Indianapolis	Atlanta
Milwaukee	Minneapolis	Baltimore	Cleveland-Akron
Houston	Buffalo	San Francisco	Seattle-Tacoma
Buffalo	Milwaukee	Jacksonville	San Diego
New Orleans	Cincinnati	Columbus	Minneapolis-St. Paul

Note: Metro area as defined by U.S. Census CMSA/MSA.

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[1] Orser 1997. pp. 13.
[2] Hartshorn 1992. pp. 65.
[3] Andreoli 1992.
[4] Hartshorn 1992. pp. 68.

As the city and downtown populations declined, the businesses, such as department stores and other retailers that served them, followed the population shift to the suburbs. This shift of retail from the city actually began in the early 1900s with the creation of small shopping centers outside the city, such as the Roland Park Shopping Center in Baltimore, built in 1907 it was the first to contain several shops in one unified structure setback from the main street with off-street parking.[5]   By the 1920s, department stores had opened suburban locations on the main routes into the city, but these were stand-alone stores without attached shops. That changed in 1950 with the opening of Northgate Center in Seattle, which was the first development that included department stores and specialty shops in the same location. In 1956, Southdale Mall in Minneapolis became the first enclosed shopping mall and it was the beginning of the removal of retail and activity from the street to enclosed self-contained structures.[6] The decentralization of retail to the suburbs from downtown was noticeable in sales figures. In 1954, downtown retail sales accounted for nearly 20 percent of the nationwide metropolitan total; by 1977 only 4 percent of metropolitan sales occurred downtown.[7] Soon industries, offices, and employers left the city as well, lured to the suburbs in part by cheap land and a cheap idle workforce,[8] leaving behind vacant buildings and a city strapped with providing services without a tax base.

2.1   URBAN RENEWAL

To help cities combat the eroding population and tax base, the federal government in 1954 and 1959 amended the Housing Act of 1949 for the concept of Urban Renewal. The Urban Renewal program was a reincarnation of the City Realty Corporation initially developed during the early 1930s.   Urban renewal had four goals:[9]

- Eliminate substandard housing,
- Revitalize city economies,
- Construct good housing, and
- Reduce segregation of economy.

The resulting programs focused heavily on the city's power of eminent domain and on the widespread demolition of old, mostly dilapidated structures and blighted areas, which included warehouses and cheap housing that was seldom followed by new construction.[10] This destroyed the fabric of the city,

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[5] Hartshorn 1992. pp. 369.
[6] Hartshorn 1992. pp. 372.
[7] Robertson 1983. pp. 314.
[8] Garreau 1991. pp. 112.
[9] Levy 1991. pp. 173.
[10] Sies 1996. pp. 415.

tore apart neighborhoods, severed family ties, and displaced poor, often minority people.[11] The goal of the Urban Renewal programs was to provide downtown with a framework of uses that matched and supported downtown and to protect and enhance the core.[12] However, instead of revitalizing the once fashionable neighborhoods that fell into disrepair, the buildings, or even entire blocks, were razed if developed at all, high-rises, often public housing, were built in their place. In general, the population density of downtown was decreased and downtown became less pedestrian friendly.[13]

To be sure, the planners and officials of the day viewed these plans as forward thinking. In the end, the success of these projects could only be determined by studying the economics, and negating the social consequences, for in those terms Urban Renewal failed. The failed projects rarely corresponded in spatial structure to the evolved community pattern they replaced, nor did they respond to the social relationships that gave meaning to the community.[14] The 1960s brought a different understanding of the role of downtowns and urban areas. No longer was downtown viewed as one entity, but as a series of intertwined activity centers which depended on the smaller scale of blocks and streets.[15]

2.2   DOWNTOWN'S NEW ROLE

By the mid-1960s, it was clear that downtowns and their cities were dying as the suburbs were increasingly seen, by residents and businesses, as the place to be to avoid the problems of the city such as crime, racial issues, and high taxation.

City officials and academics soon began a fight to save their downtowns, in part by the breakup of downtown into different activity centers based upon function.[16] These activity center were hoped to bring people back downtown through a variety of attractions and functions. However, many of these attractions were one-project quick fix attempts aimed at the urban experience, yet what worked in one city usually may not work elsewhere. Pedestrian malls and infrastructure improvements were among the widest used experiments and improved the amount and quality of open space and the pedestrian experience, but failed to increase retail development.[17] The closing of streets to vehicles simply prompted those people who drove to the city to drive elsewhere, further encouraged by the construction of the Interstate highway system. More than 200 pedestrian malls were created in cities

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[11] Sies 1996. pp. 415.
[12] Sies 1996. pp. 415.
[13] Robertson 1995. pp. 429.
[14] Trancik 1986. pp. 12.
[15] Sies 1996. pp. 416.
[16] Sies 1996. pp. 415.
[17] Robertson 1995. pp. 430.

across the United States, most of them in the 1970s. By 2000 fewer than 30 remained, and most of them were struggling for survival and debating the reopening of streets to vehicles.[18] Still a handful of attempts were successful such as Pearl Street in Boulder, Colorado and State Street in Madison, Wisconsin.[19]

Pedestrian malls such as Pearl Street and State Street survived, in part, due to the realization that these pedestrian malls were not the anchor or attraction that lured shoppers or visitors downtown, but the thread that tied the anchors.[20] In 1977, after years of planning, the City of Boulder converted its main shopping street, Pearl Street, into a pedestrian mall in an effort to save its downtown retail core, which had declined when Montgomery Wards and JC Penney relocated to suburban Crossroads Mall built in 1963. Pearl Street contained a variety of anchors that drew people, such as the city government offices and courthouse, historic two and three-level office buildings, independent local businesses, parking, and proximity to the University of Colorado. It also had the backing of the city, which created a special tax district to fund the $2 million annual operating cost, which included maintenance and trash removal. While some businesses on Pearl Street suffered from the lack of vehicle traffic, the pedestrian mall and its anchors succeeded. In 2001, Pearl Street pedestrian mall accounted for $2.2 million in sales tax revenue, compared to $1.9 million for Crossroads Mall.[21] By the mid 1980s, the success of Pearl Street had raised rents to the point of displacing local businesses. In 1986, Banana Republic and 10 national chain stores opened and 13 local businesses closed. This trend continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s as rents more than doubled from the early 1980s, and more national retailers such as Abercrombie & Fitch, Starbucks, and the Cheesecake Factory opened.[22]

Pearl Street's success benefited from the connectivity it provided to the attractions and anchors, many of which were public institutions that formed a sense of community. The pedestrian mall's designers wanted the place to be "…more than a mall…and a pageant of events rather than having the singular purpose of selling." [23] The backdrop of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains also provided a scenic view and unique location, which helped create a sense of place more than just a place to spend money.[24]

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[18] Branaugh 2002.
[19] Branaugh 2002.
[20] Downtown Raleigh Alliance.
[21] Good 2002.
[22] Wittman 1999.
[23] Wittman 1999.
[24] Good 2002.

The pedestrian malls that initially flourished, such as Kalamazoo Mall, had by the 1980s worn thin, and were transformed into a magnet for the urban underclass and skateboarders.[25] As anchors along the mall closed, the city failed to attract new generators or and the declining visitation forced the city to reopen the street to traffic in 1979.

Though attempts at downtown revitalization, through pedestrian malls, galleries, or streetscape improvements didn't work everywhere, they solidified the notion of the individual experience of the city and downtown as vital to its success.[26] By the 1970s, the suburbs had won. Shopping malls and suburban office parks developed along the Interstate highways, which often equaled and eventually surpassed in size the retail and employment base of downtown. Downtowns could not compete by offering the same retail stores or experiences found in the suburbs, instead downtowns capitalized on the experience they could offer, namely culture.[27]

The creation, identification, and advertising of cultural centers in downtowns exploited one resource that the newly built and modern suburbs lacked. These cultural centers marketed themselves towards the visitor experience and encouraged them to experience art, music, theatre, or history. Often the visitor was the out-of-town conventioneer, as cities also built larger convention centers to attract more visitors. The cultural center was often used as an enticing entertainment option.

2.3   THE RETURN DOWNTOWN

By the late 1900s, the suburbs of many cities had grown more populated and contained larger employment centers than the cities they surrounded. Commuting patterns changed as well. Reverse commuting became common, and suburb-to-suburb commuting had become an increasing problem for governments, transit, and highway authorities. The transit model of spikes radiating from the central hub of downtown to the suburbs failed as fewer people worked downtown.

As the suburbs began to fight traffic and the growth of the suburbs sprawled further into the countryside, planners, developers, and local governments looked at centrally located and sparsely populated doughnut effect on their population maps. For all the problems that downtowns had, one element it had was a central location to all suburbs with transit and highway connections to all of them.

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[25] Flisram 2000. pp. 2.
[26] Sies 1996. pp. 419.
[27] Sies 1996. pp. 420.

The success and acceptance of downtowns as cultural centers occurred as a curious event took shape in the suburbs. The crown jewel of suburban America had lost its appeal and became bland and predictable.[28] The shopping mall had not met the social needs of communities as a central gathering place.[29] Instead of being the cosmopolitan centers of fashion and trade in a sea of cloned suburbs offering a range of worldly goods and experiences away from the mundane, these shopping malls merely echoed their single-family suburban tract house neighbors. As high rents prohibited local shops from opening or remaining in malls, one after another mall became home solely to national chains, the lack of creativity became evident in new malls, and soon the only distinguishable feature was signage. The shopping mall for all its marketing and consumer surveys and testing to appeal to consumers had become boring.

In addition, the business of retail changed. Television retail expanded as cable systems added home shopping channels. Home shopping was no longer limited to department store catalogs or mail order trinkets. Fine goods that once could be found only in stores were now available; often tax free, from catalog retailers such as L.L. Bean and J. Crew.

As shopping at home became more common and the malls more predictable, patronage of malls declined, as did the total average length of stay of visitors who wanted more excitement and creativity.[30] The shopping mall offered little in terms of entertainment -- perhaps a few movie screens and a video arcade, or maybe a carousel in the center court; dining was often limited to the same fast food options available everywhere, with one or two chain sit down restaurants. Entertainment options were often viewed as diversions for children, which allowed parents to shop, unfettered, or were geared towards children to lure them along with their parents to the mall.

3.0   Rise of Entertainment

It wasn't until the movie theater industry shifted to multiplexes that the full potential of entertainment was realized. Multiplexes provided a steady stream of returning visitors to the mall, and became a powerful anchor that increased patronage and attracted new restaurants. But as the movie industry created multiplexes in part to combat the growing entertainment options at home, entertainment was also used in the restaurant industry as casual dining establishments provided a sit-down atmosphere,

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[28] Grogan 1998. pp. 39.
[29] De Avila n.d.
[30] Himmel 1998. pp. 43.

table service, good prices, and televisions. Retailers view entertainment environments as luring shoppers who might otherwise choose home shopping by mail, television, and computer.[31]

In London, the Hard Rock Café successfully merged the concept of dining with pop culture. Customers experienced dining among images, memorabilia, and the music of musicians and actors. The concept proved to be popular and the Hard Rock Cafésoon became a tourist destination in its own right.

Entertainment venues seemed to have the flexibility to be located nearly anywhere, and generated trips and revenue.[32] The view of entertainment venues as destinations was seen in terms of their economic and revitalization potential. As the suburbs built and overbuilt, they became more segregated by race, income, and culture and lacked communal urban space.[33] Thus, merely building an entertainment venue could not guarantee success. Arcades and movie theaters found they could not survive on entertainment alone, or in an area viewed as unsafe. Hence, the demand for the right location became increasingly competitive. Suddenly it was the downtown location that was perceived to answer many marketing issues. Downtown was already viewed as a cultural entertainment destination and offered a central location, parking, financial incentives, connections, and people, all of which are vital to the success of these centers.[34]

3.1   PARKING

The central business districts of newer cities and even the downtowns of older ones were marked by their underused or vacant lots. Even in areas of with high demand for parking during business hours, these spaces often lay idle after 5pm or on weekends. Entertainment centers capitalized on the availability of this parking to better position their development in the market.

3.2   LOCATION

Whether downtowns are located on the waterfront or not, they are good locations due to their centrality within the city's metropolitan area. Metropolitan regions were defined by the cities they surrounded, which was often where the main post office, courthouse, and main bank offices were located. In Baltimore, for example, a development located downtown would have equal appeal to those in the suburbs of Hunt Valley or Owings Mills. Whereas, if said development was located in either

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[31] Russell 1997. pp. 90.
[32] Grogan 1998. pp. 41.
[33] Russell 1997. pp. 91.
[34] Robertson 1995. pp. 433.

suburb, its appeal could be limited to that area surrounding that suburb and not to the metropolitan area. By locating downtown developments became inclusive of the entire region rather than relating to one particular suburb or class of people.

3.3   CONNECTIONS

Downtowns, often the historical center of employment, had effective and efficient transportation connections to surrounding areas. While mass transit between suburbs remains congested and difficult to travel, there are generally options to traveling into the city center including bus, subway, commuter trains, or even bicycle paths and trails. These connections lessened the parking burden on the developer and increased the total accessibility of the center.

3.4   PEOPLE

A basic building block of any retail development is the need for people. Downtowns offered at least the starting point of having business people there for at least eight hours a day. Add to this the guests of downtown hotels and any tourists and there was a ready-made market to be exploited. The trick was to correctly connect any new development in a way that made it accessible for the pedestrian.

3.5   INCENTIVES

Downtown locations offered a variety of incentives to developers from all levels of government. Maintaining a stable and vibrant downtown has become a priority of many localities and it is seen as an indicator of an area's economic health.

4.0   Development of Entertainment Center

As Main Street shifted from downtown to the shopping mall, many cities built enclosed shopping malls downtown. Often, these met with failure as they siphoned more life from the street and hastened downtown's decline. The enclosed shopping malls were self-contained structures poorly integrated with their surroundings.[35] The inward orientation of the mall captured the visitor, which worked well for the mall perhaps, but poorly for the streets and retailers of downtown. Often no connection existed from the mall to local streets or neighboring shopping or cultural districts.

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[35] Robertson 1995. pp. 429.

By the 1980s, two trends occurred, the changed patterns of retail and entertainment, and the changed role of downtown. As cities refocused downtown as a cultural district and convention center, entertainment became increasingly important in luring local residents and in entertaining tourists. The creation of the festival marketplace combined these two trends. James Rouse created what became the epitome of the festival marketplace with Faneuil Hall in Boston, Harborplace in Baltimore, and Waterside in Norfolk. Though each of these projects was located along the waterfront, many landlocked cities also built festival marketplaces. The festival marketplace offered more than just shops, restaurants, and parking; it recognized that the experience was just as vital to the success of the center as the stores. More than 100 cities built downtown-enclosed retail centers in the 1970s and 1980s.[36]

The Rouse festival marketplace placed the visitor experience at center stage. Situated in outward looking enclosed pavilions, these marketplaces embraced their surroundings and provided street level and pedestrian connections to surrounding offices and neighborhoods.

Absent from the festival marketplace were traditional department stores; though department stores had abandoned many downtowns in favor of suburban shopping malls by the time festival marketplaces were taking hold. Traditional malls used department stores as anchor stores to lure people into and through the mall. In essence, the experience through entertainment became the festival marketplace's anchor store. Rather than limit the newfound appreciation of the experience to the center, it was combined with that of the individual stores and a theme was created. The festival marketplaces of Baltimore and Norfolk contained a nautical theme borrowing from the history of each city as a seaport. Festival marketplaces differed from traditional malls in the following ways:[37]

- Their unusual mix of local specialty stores,
- The lack of an anchor department store,
- The strong emphasis on food and entertainment,
- The importance of historic and/or architectural themes, and
- Their specialized target market of affluent, well-educated, young adults.

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[36] Robertson 1995. pp. 429.
[37] Robertson 1995. pp. 430.

5.0 The Urban Entertainment Center

By the 1990s, the festival marketplace knew successes and failures in the revitalization of downtowns. In Virginia, Norfolk's Waterside prospered, while Richmond's Sixth Street Marketplace fizzled.   Though not always executed well, the concept of using entertainment as a catalyst proved it could work. Venues such as the Hard Rock Caféspawned clones such as Planet Hollywood and the Nascar Caféand provided high business volumes, brand name appeal, and destination drawing power.[38]   These venues were often built near each other, if not across the street, and became their own entertainment district, and the real estate developers and entertainment companies took note.   Downtowns created entertainment districts specifically oriented towards tourists and single adults. It was a different twist on the concept of adult entertainment for cities. The Disney company that revamped and ultimately sold this concept as it helped transform New York's Times Square from crime infested center of pornography to family oriented entertainment destination. The success of Times Square for the city of New York and Disney created the Urban Entertainment Center (UEC).

Unlike the festival marketplaces built during the 1980s, UECs differed from their very conception. No longer were the project developers the typical real estate developer. The drive to capitalize on the entertainment theory spawned new partnerships that involved real estate developers, national retail chains, municipalities, and such entertainment heavy-hitters as Sony, Paramount, Universal and Disney. These entertainment companies brought together traditional shopping, plus the success they gained from their large-scale theme parks such as Disney World, Paramount's King's Dominion, and MCA-Universal Studios parks provide attractions, rides, shows, shopping, office and hotels in one location.

UEC can be defined as adult-oriented entertainment destinations located downtown. These centers combined shopping and recreation with entertainment to form an overall experience. Retail needed the entertainment to draw people in and entertainment needed retail to support the overall operation.[39] In many respects what mirrored the creation of a Las Vegas casino, which provided an overall theme or setting for its gaming, retail, live shows, and other venues.

The partnership between retail and entertainment created variations of UEC and entertainment-retail centers:[40]

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[38] Braun 1995. pp. 11.
[39] Braun 1995. pp. 11.
[40] Braun 1995. pp. 12.

- The Cinema Center- contained 24 to 30 movie screens, such as Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

- Entertainment-Oriented Retail- a collection of 'bundled' retailers that offered entertainment options separately from the main center, such as Virgin Music Megastore, Barnes & Noble, and NikeTown.

- High-Tech Centers- focused on technology and gadgetry, such as high-tech video games and virtual reality, such as Jeepers and Jillians.

- Specialty Film- included large screen films such as IMAX or IMAX 3-D, or a collection of art house and independent films.

- Live Entertainment- a collection of venues that focused on music, dance, and performers.

- Entertainment-Driven Retail- a collection of retail driven by key attractions of the UEC or its surroundings.

5.1   ISSUES

Though UECs evolved differently, they have refocused downtown as a place of entertainment, geared at first towards out-of-town tourists, and later towards local residents. However, many issues regarding the use of UECs evolved as their popularity increased among cities as a source of revenue.

5.1.1 Design Considerations

Before UECs can be effective as a tool for revitalization, they must first be an effective destination. Several design considerations were developed for UECs to adhere to.

Location

It was not enough for an UEC to be located downtown or along the waterfront. Too many past downtown projects, in an effort to control the consumer and hide undesirable rundown streets, faced inward away from the street cutting the fabric of the city. Instead, UECs needed to be located in such a way that the site related to its surroundings and offered pedestrian access to other nearby attractions. Trails, bicycle routes, office buildings, and neighboring communities should be connected to the UEC and clearly signed access should be provided. Although these centers were designed as destinations, grouping them in a series of other city attractions drew more interest in the center and the city center as a whole.[41]

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[41] Russell 1997. pp. 91.

The heart of any UEC was the attractions. In order to attract people repeatedly UECs needed attractions that changed continually over time. This is why nearly all UECs had movie theaters. These theaters were not the ordinary shopping mall theaters with six or eight screens, but large multiplexes that offered anywhere from 14 to 30 screens; some UEC theaters had screens nearly as high as a three-story building. Theaters also enticed people to combine the movie with other attractions. Nearly one-third of all moviegoers combined a trip to the movies with other activities, such as dining or nightclubbing.

In addition to the multiplex, the UEC offered an IMAX or other specialty theater. Although IMAX theaters were usually found only in museums of the largest cities, the company began building smaller 300 seat theaters, which worked well in medium sized cities or UEC concepts. There were a variety of IMAX theaters such as 3-D, which provided distinction from the hometown IMAX of the visitor.

5.1.2 Architecture

The most striking feature about the UEC was the architecture. Unlike the sterile utilitarian style of the shopping mall, UECs were vibrant and larger than life and described as a place where tenants could do what they always wanted to do but were never allowed. The theaters, shops, and buildings were often built on a larger scale, often 1 1/2 times their normal size, which helped create a sense of density.

The typical shopping mall placed anchor stores on the ends, however, with UECs the typical anchors did not exist, there were different attractions, and it became more difficult to keep these places active as people were there all day long.[42]

Although there was no one right design for the UEC, it met several key design elements.   As mentioned above, the centers provided pedestrian links to surrounding land uses, and were pedestrian friendly with few, if any, conflicts with other modes of transportation.

It also helped if the center had a theme. An overall theme aided the visitor in remembering the center and provided for a more enjoyable stay. Themes were often different from the ordinary.   Inside, the center often contained lively and invigorating open spaces, which allowed people to congregate. A layering of different elements over this space helped to assure that it was well used. A variety of activities and programmed events occurred in the open spaces other than the simple amenities of

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[42] Mays 1996. pp. 97.

benches and fountains.[43]   The promenades were lined with shops and, if possible, outdoor cafes were used to create a more festive atmosphere.

In many cases, the successful UECs recreated the idealized small town main street. This worked when the scale of building to street did not exceed the 1:1.5 ratio, otherwise a canyon effect was created and the street read as too urban.[44]

Signage played a large part in the design of the UEC. Imagine Times Square in New York or the Las Vegas strip without their signs. Would they be just another city intersection or long boring thoroughfare? The fact is that signs, elaborate signs, could make places more exciting, as architecture, even great architecture is not entertaining.[45] In the case of UECs, the term supersignage had taken hold. These were signs that were larger than life and placed right at street level where they were impossible to miss. In effect, these signs not only provided identification for the retailer and the center, but also became pieces of art.[46]   In one center, large gorillas hung over the walkway and elaborate neon and colorful signs hung over entrances and in windows. The result was space that was created and defined by a graphic medium that provided the public with cues as to point of entry and information.

5.1.3 Fun as a Concept

The goal of the UEC for the city or developer was, perhaps, to create tax revenue, or to sell food, or merchandise, but for the visitor the overriding concept was to have fun. Entertainment was the draw and a large part of what created the unique experience of the center. The trick was to create a center with the right balance of retail and entertainment. If the center contained too much retail it read to the visitor as an ordinary shopping mall, conversely, if there were too many entertainment options people forgot to make purchases. While it was more common for the entire center to use the concept of providing entertainment, large individual retail stores also utilized this philosophy, such as the REI Company that offered interactive activities inside their stores which allowed shoppers to test out and purchase merchandise.

Thus, to create the balance of retail, entertainment, and, in essence, the level of fun, downtown associations, developers, and cities followed four basic rules of the trade:[47]

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[43] Jacob n.d.
[44] Fader 1995. pp. 19.
[45] Himmel 1998. pp. 44.
[46] Fader 1995. pp. 19.
[47] Fader 1995. pp. 20.

- A good concept was not enough. Simply having a brilliant idea would not make a successful venture. In 1992, the Edison brothers had an idea to recreate the Star Trek experience for everyone. They hoped to put this experience in local shopping malls, but the concept failed largely because the owners had not realized the full potential of the medium. [11] A few years after they debuted, they sold out to Paramount Inc. Paramount expanded the concept and incorporated this project into their full-fledged UEC concepts.

- Uniqueness. While the center had to be unique in architecture and design, so too had the tenants. They needed to offer the visitor something different than what could be found in the local shopping malls. This was a demanding task as rents in UECs often prevented the establishment of local small businesses, and those who succeeded were quickly copied. What is today's truly special and unique experience is tomorrow's national chain.

- Technology. Technology assisted in offering exciting and new experiences, but the center itself could not be too high-tech. Behind the scenes there could be as many bells and whistles as it took to create the experience, such as laser shows on the food court ceilings, but merely having high-tech wizardry did not an UEC make. In addition, such high-tech products were expensive to produce and quickly became boring to the repeat visitor, upon whom UECs depended on for survival.

- Freshness. The greatest design, performers, or products almost always grew stale eventually. To be successful, the UEC kept its offerings new and exciting. While UECs relied heavily on the tourist trade, they made the realization that local business was just as important, as locals could more easily repeat their business and could balance the fluctuations in the tourist industry. As with technology, UECs endeavored to keep the center fresh. This created a balance in the types of retailers and balance of the costs of goods and services provided in the center.

Outside of the economic success of the UEC as a profitable and fun destination, there were more social issues involved with UECs. These issues included the use of urban space and form, the cost of the public financing of these centers, and issues of sustainable development. The following sections discuss these issues as they apply to UEC development.

5.2   PUBLIC SPACE VS. PRIVATE SPACE

As with the shopping mall and the strip shopping center, UEC developments were private property. That fact limited the rights and actions of those utilizing the space, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the center's owners. Thus, UECs could be compared to shopping malls that denied any activity, even those legal on public streets, without written permission from the owner.[48] UECs could generally be compared to shopping malls in almost every respect but scale. Though they were

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[48] Gratz 1998. pp. 100.

large, dominant structures on the landscape and had a distinct presence much like the mall, they were not the stereotypical indoor climate controlled centers. Where shopping malls generally maintained a distinct inward focus and precise delineation of the space, UECs often incorporated a variety of outdoor plazas, corridors, paths, trails, courtyards, and interior space that blurred the line between public and private property and space. That blurring denied the public realm any chance of survival.[49]

Often, the outdoor spaces were designed to fit into the larger theme of the center such as a Moroccan marketplace in California or to be integrated into the existing theme of the location such as along the waterfront. It was the outside location and the center's connectivity to surrounding uses that gave the illusion of public space. In reality, those open spaces were private property maintained and policed by the developer or property owner.[50] The conversion of seemingly public space to private space brought its own set of issues.

First, those private spaces often excluded certain groups of people such as the elderly, homeless, teenagers, and others who did not look like they belonged.[51] The elderly were generally not seen as having enough disposable income to be a desirable market segment, although in the past few years that image changed as the baby boomers hit retirement age. Teenagers, often viewed as having a great deal of disposable income, were generally unwelcome when they visited as part of a group of friends or visiting the center while not making purchases.

The homeless, often an undesirable element in both public and private space, were viewed by the center owners as loiterers and a distraction to the consumer, and to the consumer as annoying and a possible security risk.

A second issue was the security and maintenance of these spaces. Although they seemed to serve a partial function of providing public space, the laws that governed private property required that the owner provide proper security for consumers and employees as well as upkeep on the center. In addition to maintenance, security was handled through a private security force, sometimes armed with weapons that patrolled the center. The notion of keeping the peace and individual rights was often less important to the center, as removing anything or anyone that might interfere with the consumer.

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[49] Gratz 1998. pp. 100.
[50] Rustin. n.d. pp. 56
[51] Fader 1995. pp. 22.

A third issue was that these spaces in themselves did not serve as true public spaces. The liveliness and sociability of these spaces should not ignore the principle activity for which these settings were designed- marketing.[52] True public spaces were designed to bring together many different classes and types of people in a setting that was conducive to cross-cultural interaction. Private spaces, however, by design, only attracted consumers or tourists. There was often little or no community involvement or public discourse occurring in UECs.

The issue of public space versus private space was not new with the UEC phenomenon and there were lessons to be learned from shopping malls and other urban spaces. However, the scale of the UEC differentiated it from the open plaza of an office tower as UEC spaces often incorporated several downtown city blocks designed to meet the needs of the center, rather than to meld in the overall scheme of city space.

5.3   FINANCING, REVENUE, AND TAXATION

Cities used a variety of methods to lure businesses and developers to locate within their boundaries. Likewise, businesses used a variety of methods to finance their projects while limiting risk to their own capital. Public subsidies were usually involved in downtown real estate projects to attract developers to locations, which were undesirable or provided greater risk to lenders. Since UECs were relatively new and unproven, risk was viewed as greater than building a shopping mall or other standard development.

This risk could have been due, in part, to the developer of the UEC. To the real estate industry, the UEC was a shopping center. The success of the center, in terms of investment, was based upon the tried and true method of leases and rents. Income was derived from leasing space to tenants, and in part the amount of the rent was based upon the quality and quantity of other tenants. The entertainment industry, the other major player, viewed UECs as owner/operator businesses.[53] As such, income was derived from admissions, food and drinks sales, merchandise sales, and gaming revenue.[54]

These two perspectives were even further muddied with the introduction of non-conforming hybrid centers where the owner was able to lease out part of the operation such as food, retail, or hotel activities. Yet despite such unresolved issues among developers and operators, there remained at least one common understanding of what the UEC was. The UEC was a place that offered a sufficient

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[52] Rustin n.d. pp 55.
[53] Hackett 1995. pp. 25.
[54] Hackett 1995. pp. 25.

number of attractions and events to attract the customer's attention for a long period of time (usually two hours) and appealed enough to draw people from out of their way to experience them.[55]

There were five standard targets that needed to be met in the financing realm.[56]

- There was to be a high level of equity in the project, typically at least 50 percent.
- There was to be a high level of pre-leasing, typically at least 70 percent.
- Cash flow was to be stabilized at a level equal to 1.5 times debt service.
- The loan to total cost ratio was to be between 50 and 60 percent.
- There were to be adequate debt pricing expectations.

Attracting financing for UECs was challenging for the city and private developer. For the private real estate developers the best sources were those that had previously backed entertainment projects. But if this was not an option, there were other potential sources that could be utilized:[57]

- Venture Capital Funds.
- Leveraged Buy-out Funds.
- Public Sector Partnership.
- Entertainment Investment Funds.
- Specific Purpose Acquisition Company (SPAC).
- Strategic Investors.

In addition to the private financing arrangements used by developers, the economic development arms of city governments had access to a variety of grants, loans, or bonds to arrange financing or secure risk. These grants and loans varied from voter-approved bonds to federal government grants and are listed below. Many of the programs were controversial and generated heated discussion over the effectiveness of public subsidies and the return on the public's investment with low paying jobs or low revenue.

Local/City Programs

- General Obligation Bond,
- Revenue Bond,

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[55] Peterson 1998. pp. 24.
[56] Hackett 1995. pp. 26.
[57] Hackett 1995. pp. 26.

- Land-Banking,
- Loans and Grants,
- Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), and
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

State Programs

- Enterprise Zones,
- Brownfields Programs,
- Loans and Grants, and
- Tax Credits.

Federal Programs

- Empowerment Zone,
- Industrial Revenue Bonds, and
- Community Development Block Grant.

In addition to financing of UEC development, downtown developments also benefited from the creation of Business Improvements Districts (BID). BIDs worked by assessments on property values of businesses located within their districts. These assessments were used to make improvements to streetscapes, storefronts, security, and trash removal.[58]

5.4   SUSTAINABILITY

The creative and unique designs of UECs often showcased the improbable in their designs. Yet these unique designs were often not be the most environmentally friendly. The basic question was if these centers were being designed for long-term survival, or expending considerable effort to cash in on a current retail trend?

Some of the basic tenets of sustainable design are hydrology, energy, re-use, and connectivity. Since UEC projects were individually created there was no broad response to how they answered these tenets. Yet each center needed to be designed such as to cause as few environmental effects as possible and to mitigated these effects.

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[58] Houstoun 2002.

5.4.1 Hydrology and wetlands

Like the shopping mall, UECs could demand large amounts of parking and required a substantial amount of paved surfaces. Fortunately, by definition, these centers were located downtown where there was an abundance of existing infrastructure ready to be used, especially in the evening hours. However, that was not to preclude the addition and adoption of other methods to reclaim water. Such methods included retention and detention ponds on the rooftops of buildings, which slowed the rate of water downstream. Also, the use of permeable pavers and asphalt allowed some amount of water to return to the soil recharging the water table.

5.4.2 Energy

Many UECs highlighted technological features, which required vast amounts of computer technology and electricity to operate. The supersignage incorporated by many centers also drained energy resources, as did the need to cool and heat spaces to create artificial environments, such as the planting of palm trees at northern latitudes. Care was to be given to utilize energy efficient lighting to encourage the use of solar lighting and solar energy whenever possible. To the design of the center also had to ensure that the created environments were compatible with existing conditions

The materials chosen for the project should be energy efficient. Materials from exotic locations might look enchanting, but could do more environmental damage in the long run than local or longer lasting materials.

5.4.3 Re-use

One great asset of UECs was their creative design and re-use of existing, often abandoned, or historical structures. This practice saved energy and resources, maintained the existing urban fabric of the location, and maintained a sense of place and history.

5.4.4 Connectivity

One of the successes of UECs was the connection to various attractions and resources that they provided. Often UECs linked surrounding areas and acted as a hub connecting the various spikes of museums, hotels, office building, and housing.

Designs provided connections using transit that lessened the impact of the automobile. Pedestrian links to housing and nearby office buildings were encouraged and were at street level whenever possible. This helped to ensure a busier and perceptually safer street.

6.0 Case Studies

This section will examine the use of UECs in two cities, Baltimore and Denver. Both cities knew periods of wealth and decline, and both have had to "come back" in one way or another. What this discussion will examine is the difference between these two cities and their individual uses of UEC as a catalysts for downtown revitalization.

Baltimore is located on the eastern seaboard, and Denver is on the front range of the Rocky Mountains. One is modern, the other old. One is high-tech, the other working-class. Yet, they have both struggled against the suburbs, the shopping malls, crime, slums, and depressed economies. The use of UECs to satisfy that need is still maturing. While it is too soon to say what the long-term consequences of such a mass-market approach will be, enough time has passed since the development of the first UECs to examine the effects so far.

6.1   BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Located on the northern edge of the Chesapeake Bay, the city of Baltimore was founded in 1706. At the turn of the 18th century, Baltimore was the third largest city in the United States and a center of transportation, linking north with south. The harbor was the focus of the city, the transportation of goods, materials, and people led to steady growth for nearly two hundred years. The city fell into a brief period of decline after the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904, which destroyed more than 1,500 buildings in 70 city blocks and left 35,000 people unemployed.

In the 20th century, Baltimore reached nearly one million people before it population declined. The decline was due to suburbanization and to employment lost as the city's shipping industry converted from traditional break-bulk shipment to containers.[59] Old ports that were slow to modernize, such as Baltimore, could not handle newer ships and lost ground to more aggressive ports eager to compete, such as Norfolk.

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[59] Hayword 2001. pp. 178.

6.1.1 Population

From 1990 to 2000, the population of Baltimore decreased 11.5 percent to 635,210. Baltimore is located in a metropolitan area consisting of 2,474,118 people. In 2000, Baltimore's downtown contained a population of 39,400. Over 64 percent of all Baltimore residents are black, and 32 percent white. Only 1.7 percent of residents describe themselves as having Hispanic origin, which is less than half the Maryland state average and seven and a half times less than the national average.

Figure 1 shows the population of the City of Baltimore from1880. Baltimore's population surged in the 1800s resulting from prosperity and immigration. That changed in the 1950s with suburbanization. Note the population drop beginning with the 1950 census and which continues today. Baltimore's population was about the same in 2000 as it was nearly 85 years earlier.

Figure 1: Population of Baltimore
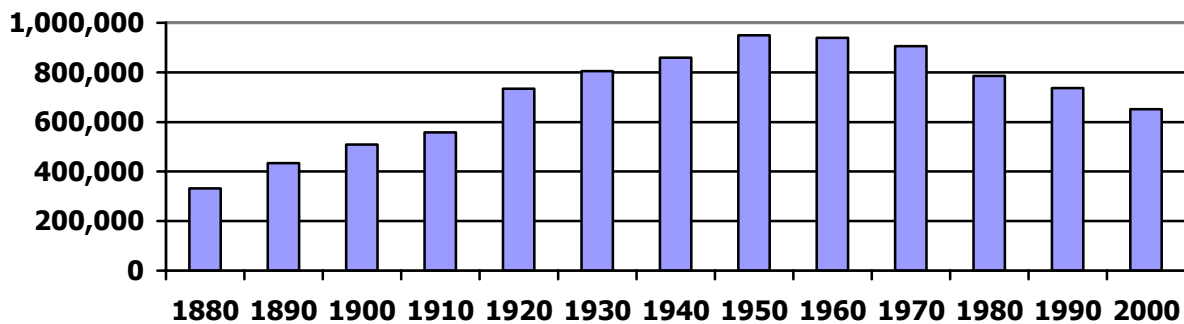
6.1.2 Housing

Baltimore's rowhouse imitated English terrace housing and followed the ground-rent system of leased land to builders until 1782. The rowhouses were similar in design to those of London, and before 1800, most were only for the wealthy. Rapid growth due to shipping at the start of the 1800s brought with it rowhouses for the workers. As rowhouses were built for the masses, the size and quality of construction lessened, with free black workers residing in the tiniest rowhouses.[60]

The rowhouse continued to be the dominant housing style, influenced in design by each wave of immigrants, such as the Italians, and by new thinking in urban design such as the inclusion of urban parks (see Figure 2).

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[60] Hayward 2001. pp. 176.

Figure 2: Rowhouses of Baltimore

Photo source: Computer Chair Traveler.org

As streetcars, and later cars, created suburbs further from the city, rowhouses became less dominant in newer developments. Typically, these new areas were for the wealthy, such as Roland Park in north Baltimore. By the end of World War II, tract houses and the single-family house had ended the dominance of the rowhouse.

As the middle-class left the city and downtown for the suburbs, downtown also faced the problem of public housing. A ring of blight had formed within a mile radius of downtown in the older section of town. These areas were overcrowded, debilitated, and fostered disease.

Baltimore's substandard housing was the third worst in the country, behind St. Louis and Chicago.[61] Four areas were noted for their high rate of tuberculosis, Old Town, Federal Hill, Fells Point, and northwest Baltimore. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the U.S. Housing Authority created public housing to eliminate such conditions based upon the "tower in the park" concept of August Perrett and Le Corbusier. Public housing also had the hidden agenda to alleviate the fears of white residents alarmed

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[61] Hayward 2001. pp. 172.

by the rising black population and encroachment of blacks into white areas.[62]   Thus blocks of rowhouses and streets were razed and huge superblocks were created that grouped colonies of high-rise towers in abstract green space.

By the 1960s, Baltimore was in danger of becoming ringed with high-rise public housing buildings.[63]   The Baltimore Plan, an innovative pilot project to rehabilitate older areas of the city and end the need for public housing and the razing of neighborhoods, failed under the massive number of substandard houses as nearly 20 percent of the city's housing was substandard.[64]

The oldest rowhouses in Baltimore, those in Federal Hill and Fells Point, had deteriorated to the point of slums by the 1960s. Baltimore condemned these areas in 1967 to create Interstate 95. The razing of these areas would destroy Baltimore's earliest history and fabric of the city.[65]   Residents opposed the Interstate highway and used the National Register of Historic Places to assist their fight. While the fight ensued, the city continued to condemn housing. In 1977, there was still no Interstate highway through downtown and the city was left with dozens of vacant houses. In addition, the public housing high-rises had turned into failures and crime and poverty dominated the projects. By 2000, the high-rises were torn down and some residents relocated to new public housing rowhouses.

By the 1970s, Federal Hill rowhouses were being rehabilitated with money and loans eligible through the historic designations and sold at market-rates.[66]   This redevelopment spurred others to act and capitalize on the renewed interest in rowhouses. Baltimore, with 5,000 abandoned rowhouses, instituted a homesteading program. This program sold houses to renovators for one dollar and provided low interest loans up to $20,000. The success of the program attracted developers such as James Rouse and the failure of the highway project opened up downtown land along the harbor for development. Today more than 35,400 people live downtown, and renovated rowhouses in the older areas such as Fells Point and Federal Hill command top dollar with some listing for over $250,000.

6.1.3 Crime

The wave of crime prevalent in the slums of Baltimore, and later the projects, continues today. In 1999, the Baltimore Economic Digest called Baltimore was, "…one of the nation's poorest, most rapidly

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[62] Hayward 2001. pp. 173.
[63] Hayward 2001. pp. 174.
[64] Hayward 2001. pp. 175.
[65] Hayward 2001. pp. 176.
[66] Hayward 2001. pp. 179.

declining cities." Through the 1980s and 1990s, crime thrived in Baltimore. By 1998, Baltimore ranked second in violent crime in the nation, and second in murder among cities with a population over 100,000. The number of people murdered in Baltimore has exceeded 300 people each year since 1988 and the city has a murder rate seven times the national average.

The Baltimore Police Department believes the surge in city crime is due in part to past changes in law enforcement practices. As the police force, the city, and the nation focused on the reactive 911 responses with a centralized police command structure, attention shifted away from proactive crime prevention and solution. From 1960 to 1990, violent crime in America increased 13 times faster than population.[67]

From 1999, Baltimore adopted a hard stance on crime and crime prevention and the number of murders in the city dropped to under 300 for the first time in eleven years. By 2000, Baltimore ranked first among cities in America in reducing violent crime, which had dropped 23 percent.[68]

6.1.4 Parking and Transit

There is a shortage of parking spaces in Baltimore. While there are more than 12,000 parking spaces are within three blocks of the Inner Harbor, demand is high and rates have reached $20 per day and $225 per month on average.

Construction of parking decks in downtown and the Inner Harbor has gained momentum including and there are 2,605 parking spaces under construction.

Transit to downtown Baltimore is provided by bus, light-rail transit (LRT), metro subway, and commuter rail. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, more than 54 percent of commuters drive alone, 19.5 percent use transit, and 22.3 percent walk, bike, or carpool to work.

6.1.5 Economics

In the 1970s, redevelopment grants for blighted areas of downtown Baltimore were cut back leaving the city to find alternative sources of revenue. This halted the city's plan to redevelop the Inner Harbor and open the harbor shoreline to the public. To compensate for the loss of these funds, the city turned to tourism. In 1979, the Baltimore Convention Center opened. One year later, Harborplace opened in

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[67] City of Baltimore.
[68] City of Baltimore.

the Inner Harbor and attracted 18 million visitors in that year. In addition, Baltimore invested in other tourist attractions such as the National Aquarium, and with the aid of financial incentives attracted a major hotel to the Inner Harbor. In 1992, the major league Baltimore Orioles moved into their new ballpark, which further enhanced the Inner Harbor as a tourist destination. Today, more than 15 million people visit downtown Baltimore each year.

Job growth in downtown Baltimore for 2000-2001 was less than that of the Baltimore metropolitan area, 0.9 percent compared to 2.5 percent.[69] Over 5,000 new jobs in downtown came from existing companies hiring new staff, and 225 new companies located in downtown creating 1,500 jobs. However, the number of jobs that left Baltimore totaled 5,000 as those companies relocated or went out of business.

The trend in Baltimore is toward a more hospitality-oriented work force.[70] Office workers accounted for 51 percent of the downtown work force in 2000 and 49 percent in 2001. Philadelphia had an office worker rate of 60 percent. The decline in office workers affected the demand for goods and services downtown. Baltimore office workers earned from $46,000 to $67,000 per year while hospitality-oriented workers earned $17,000 to $24,000 per year.[71]

In 2001, downtown Baltimore contained 12 million square feet of office space and provided employment for 95,000 people. Several office buildings were under construction or rehabilitation in and near the Inner Harbor, and the Inner Harbor East section became home to trendy lofts, upscale dining, and shopping such as Whole Foods Markets. Office vacancy rates in the Inner Harbor were at 4 percent, versus 11 percent for all of downtown.

6.1.6 Harborplace

In 1980, Harborplace opened on formerly blighted land adjacent to the harbor, a few blocks from Baltimore's downtown (see Figure 3). Developed by the Rouse Company, the festival marketplace was to contain three pavilions of retail space, but was scaled back to two due to the objections of residents and businesses of nearby Little Italy. Harborplace focused more on the tourist and in the end contained 275,000 square feet of retail space and a food court.

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[69] Downtown Partnership of Baltimore.
[70] Davis 2002. pp. 4.
[71] Davis 2002. pp. 12.

Figure 3: Harborplace and the Gallery

Looking north from the south pavilion. Note the amphitheater, which is used as a focal point connecting the two pavilions, the Gallery across Pratt Street, and the water taxi companies, off the picture to the right.
Photo source: Computer Chair Traveler.org

Harborplace represented a success for Baltimore's waterfront. Its success was due mostly to the acceptance and patronage of area residents. Nearly 45 percent all off visits to Harborplace were from Baltimore area residents.[72] The later additions of the Power Plant, a power plant that was converted into the theme restaurants ESPNzone, the Hard Rock Café and a Barnes and Noble bookstore; the addition of the Gallery, an upscale shopping arcade adjacent to Harborplace; Port Discovery; and Power Plant Live, a restaurant and night-club venue, further established the Inner Harbor as a destination.

While the success of Harborplace provided an anchor for Baltimore, development in the Inner Harbor came at a price. Public subsidies were generous in Baltimore and increasingly commonplace. The Harborplace Hyatt Hotel was built with only $500,000 of the developer's money, the rest through public subsidy, which included a $10 million Urban Development Action Grant. Today, this hotel is regarded as one of the chain's most successful locations. Similar and better deals were also initiated with the Baltimore Orioles, Baltimore Ravens, Marriott Hotels, and many others.

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[72] Rouse Company.

6.2   DENVER, COLORADO

Located on the eastern edge of Rocky Mountains, the city of Denver was founded in 1859. It is one of the few cities in the world not founded on a road, railroad, lake, navigable river, or body of water. Its location instead was determined by gold and the resulting Gold Rush in which Denver grew from 4,000 to 106,000 people in 1890 alone. Denver has been a boomtown and a bust town. The passage of the Sherman Silver Act in 1893, and the subsequent collapse of the silver market gave Denver the first taste of harsh economic times and halted the city's rapid growth. Thousands of miners lost their jobs and the unemployed workers swelled into the city. So many, that the railroad offered free fares for miners to leave Denver. In the early 1900s, prosperity once again found a home in Denver and by the 1970s, Denver enjoyed a new generation of wealth. Skyscrapers, as tall as 50-stories remade the city and changed the image of the cow town. However, in the 1980s, Denver's oil economy collapsed when oil sank from $39 a barrel to $9. Investment, residents, and opportunities abandoned the city and office occupancy levels sank to the lowest in the country for any urban area.

In the later 1990s high technology had replaced oil and Denver once again enjoyed a rebirth in investment. The effects of the recent collapse of the technology market are still unfolding.

6.2.1 Population

From 1990 to 2000, the population of Denver increased 18.6 percent to 554,636. Denver is located in a metropolitan area consisting of 2,200,000 people. The downtown contains a population of 6,720. Over 65 percent of all Denver residents are white, and 11 percent black. Over 31 percent describe themselves as having Hispanic origin, which is nearly double the Colorado state average and two and a half time greater than the national average.

Figure 4 shows the population of the City of Denver from 1880 to 2000. Denver experienced rapid population growth until the 1970s. Suburbanization and the economic slowdown of the 1980s further eroded the city's population. However, a booming economy in the 1990s reversed the decline. Housing availability and construction in downtown expanded. In 2000, 6,702 people lived downtown and 65,489 lived in the city center neighborhoods. Incomes averaged $44,423 for downtown residents and $29,999 for city center residents.[73]

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[73] Downtown Denver Partnership

Figure 4: Population of Denver
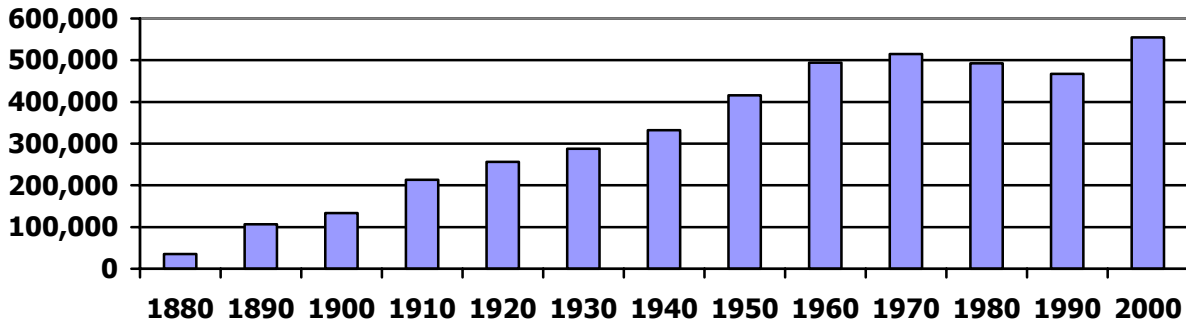
6.2.2 Housing

Rowhouses were rare in Denver, but did exist. The dominant housing style though is the single-family detached house, which reflects the open space spirit of the American West. The original center of the city, known as Lower Downtown, was a bustling commercial district from the city's founding until World War II.

Neighborhoods, such as Curtis Park, sprang up surrounding downtown and included a wide range of housing from the rowhouse to the classic two-story Denver Square house, to grand Victorian mansions. Curtis Park included Denver's first public park, which was built in 1868 and located in the center of the neighborhood. Areas such as Curtis Park were unique in that they contained a range of housing styles and prices that attracted a broad spectrum of people. Adjacent to Curtis Park and Lower Downtown was Five Points. This area, a combination of warehouses and two to three story brick houses, became home to Denver's black population.

By the 1880s though, the wealthy had moved to Capitol Hill, where they built Victorian, Tudor, and Greek style mansions.

The crash of the silver market slowed growth in Denver, but by the 1900s Victorian homes were once again being built as prosperity returned. As the population grew and the city expanded, the downtown shifted eastward towards the Capitol building and the wealthy neighborhoods. Lower Downtown and the older, inner city neighborhoods become home to slums, vacant buildings, and rising minority populations.

In the late 1960s, the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) demolished the old warehouses and offices of lower downtown, and the old Victorian houses of one of the city's oldest neighborhood, Auraria, which had become a mostly Hispanic area. In 1976, the Auraria Higher Education Center opened in the former neighborhood. Today, it is home to the Metropolitan State College of Denver, the University of Colorado at Denver, and the Community College of Denver. Lower Downtown remained in ruins until the 1990s.

High-rises and skyscrapers were built at a rapid pace during the oil boom days of the 1970s, and the neighborhoods of downtown and the city were less than fashionable as the suburbs formed. However, downtown Denver was not the only major employment center in Denver; Stapleton Airport and Lowry Air Force Base also demanded large workforces and further encouraged creation of the suburbs as these neighborhoods were almost entirely automobile dependent.

The creation of the Lower Downtown Historic District stopped DURA from razing entire blocks of warehouses and houses. By the 1990s, a demand for housing and the building of Coors Field, the Colorado Rockies ballpark, spurred interest in Lower Downtown. Money was granted for renovation and warehouses were converted to lofts. Today Lower Downtown, or LoDo, is one of Denver's trendiest neighborhoods, attracting urban professionals and services such as bookstores and bakeries.

6.2.3 Crime

Crime in Denver dropped 9.7 percent from 1990 to 2000, while the city population increased 20.7 percent during the same time. In 2000, Denver had a murder rate of 3.8 per 100,000 people compared to the national average of 5.5 per 100,000 people.

Crime was higher in the older neighborhoods of Denver, including Five Points and Highlands. These areas continued to be characterized by dilapidated buildings, higher unemployment, and high drug usage.

6.2.4 Parking and Transit

Compared to other large cities, parking in downtown Denver is plentiful and inexpensive. There were 38,030 parking spaces located in LoDo, along 17th Street, and near the Convention Center and parking averaged $6 per day and $110 per month.

Parking demand in Denver has been eased by the 16th Street Mall Shuttle, a free shuttle bus service along the pedestrian mall (see Figure 5). This service provided quick access through downtown and allowed parkers to use parking lots that would otherwise be too inconvenient.

Transit service to downtown Denver is provided by bus and two LRT lines. Though 68.7 percent of commuters drive alone, 8.4 percent use transit while nearly 18 percent walk, bike, or carpool.

Figure 5: 16th Street Mall in Denver

This picture shows the 16th Street Mall in Denver. The street is closed to vehicle traffic except for the free shuttle bus service that operates from Union Station to the Civic Center Park.

6.2.5 Economy

Denver's economic history is one of good times or bad. In the late 1980s, the times were bad as the oil and savings and loans collapsed, and office vacancy rates jumped to 30 percent. By 1995, the last downtown department store had closed and numerous office buildings stood vacant. In response, the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) was established to stimulate growth, add life to empty downtown streets. Ironically, it was the cooling of the economy which helped save many of the older buildings in downtown as developers and property owners were left with empty office towers, which gave the DDP time to organize the Historic District.

Following in the footsteps of other cities, the DDP created a pedestrian mall through downtown, but with the Regional Transportation District provided free shuttle service along the street. The DDP also became focused on the tourist and the convention trade. The city built a 292,000 square foot convention center in 1990, and by 1993 the Colorado Rockies baseball team was playing in a new ballpark in LoDo. Downtown's emerging focus on tourism continued in 1995 when Elitch Gardens (now Six Flags Elitch Gardens), an amusement and theme park, relocated from the suburbs to a large site on the edge of downtown.

By the late 1990s, the economy boomed, office vacancy rates had dropped to 6.3 percent and space was hard to find. The city's new entertainment focus included the construction of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, which was the second largest center in the country after Lincoln Center in New York City.

In 1994, job growth occurred at 4 percent compared to a national average of 2.6 percent. This trend continued through the 1990s, with most new jobs in the finance, insurance, and real estate sectors. However, the fastest growing sector was the service industry, which had reached 30 percent of the market.

In the early 2000s, the collapse of the dot-com and high technology sector was only beginning to be felt in Denver. In 2001, office vacancy rates in downtown more than doubled to 12.4 percent.

6.2.6 Denver Pavilions

Denver attracts over 9.6 million visitors each year. In addition to skiing at nearby resorts, visitors found downtown Denver to be a destination in its own right. The convention center was expanding to double its current size, and there were more than 5,200 hotel rooms.

The DDP focused the downtown on the tourist market and saved the history of the city. Larimar Square, a Victorian section of town, was preserved and restored to include art galleries, restaurants, and nightclubs. However, despite the many new attractions, what was missing downtown was a retail core. The closure of the department stores had left a void in downtown and along the 16th Mall that the smaller discount replacements and enclosed multi-level shopping plazas were unable to fill.

Spurred by the success of entertainment retail and UECs in other cities, the DDP worked with developers and created the Denver Pavilions, an entertainment and shopping pavilion located along the 16th Street Mall, at a cost of $104.5 million; of which DURA issued $31.5 million in bonds netting $24 million in TIF.

Opened in 1998, the Denver Pavilions contained 350,000 square feet of retail. The floor plan was open air and faced the 16th Street Mall. Street level tenants included the Hard Rock Café Barnes and Noble, Maggiano's Little Italy, NikeTown, and Virgin Music (see Figure 6). To attract people to the upper floors, a movie multiplex and large theme restaurants, such as Wolfgang Pucks, were located there.

At a time when most stores and restaurants closed when employees went home at 5 p.m., the Pavilions offered extended hours, staying open to 10 p.m. This gave new life to downtown streets. In 1999, the 16th Street Mall was ranked Denver's top tourist attraction, beating out Cherry Creek Mall, an upscale shopping mall featuring Neiman Marcus, Lord & Taylor, Foleys, Saks Fifth Avenue, and movie theatres. The Pavilions were responsible for increasing pedestrian traffic by 81 percent and increasing the public's perception of downtown as cosmopolitan.

Since the construction of the Denver Pavilions, the high tech industry had collapsed, which sent office vacancy rates up across the Denver metropolitan area. Interestingly, it was the suburban office centers that continue to suffer most from this, as their office vacancy rates range from 30 to 50 percent, while downtown Denver averages 12 percent.

Figure 6: Denver Pavilions

Denver Pavilions along the 16th Street Mall looking east towards to the state capital.

7.0 Project Success

7.1 DEFINITION OF PROJECT SUCCESS

Whether UEC development was a natural evolution of the downtown or one of many white elephant plans that aimed at urban revitalization depends on the point of view. All parties in a development want the project to be successful, yet the definition of success seems to differ among the stakeholders. Consider the City of Richmond. Some local leaders declared the cancellation of subsidies to the downtown Sixth Street Marketplace would eliminate the 381 jobs at the center, which was a location that offered little chance for those displaced workers to find other work. Thus, those leaders viewed

those jobs, few as they were as a success for the city. Others viewed the center as an incubator for minority businesses. City leaders however, succumbed to the realization that the subsidies paid to the Marketplace, $38 million over ten years, created few low-paying jobs, which lacked benefits.

Likewise, the City of Baltimore continues to spend more on subsidies in the Inner Harbor than it brings in through tax revenue. The Marriott Waterfront Hotel was granted $36.6 million in subsidies, which created 652 jobs, for a subsidy per job of $56,179, which paid on average $20,000 per year.[74] Yet, the project is considered a success by the city as 79 percent of its employees are city residents and more than one-third residents of the empowerment zone.[75]

The creation of Harborplace and the re-alignment of downtown to a tourist-oriented and entertainment district had placed Baltimore as the 16th largest tourist destination in the country. Visitation increased 36 percent from 1992 to 1997 and those visitors spent an average of $2.67 billion. The number of jobs in downtown Baltimore increased 80 percent from 1970 to 1995.[76]

Certainly, statistics like these sound successful. Yet the jobs that were created, mostly non-unionized tourist-related jobs pay 46 percent of the average city job. Other jobs that were created were more in line with the barbell effect of highly paid professionals and the lower paid service support workers.[77]

While, the creation of jobs is one measure of success, the spillover effect is another. Harborplace, the Sixth Street Marketplace in Richmond, and the Denver Pavilions were all expected to provide spillover into other areas of the city, and create jobs and revenue for areas beyond the center's boundary. Harborplace sat alone in the Inner Harbor for years, surrounded by derelict neighborhoods before rehabilitation efforts began to take hold in the Federal Hill section. In addition to rehabilitation efforts, new housing in downtown Baltimore was built, and apartments along the Inner Harbor now lease for upwards of $2,000 per month. Development and redevelopment continues along the waterfront to Inner Harbor East with the construction of a Whole Foods Market and upcoming movie theatres, and two luxury hotels, the Ritz-Carlton and the Four Seasons have announced plans to build in the Inner Harbor.

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[74] Davis 2002. pp. 35.
[75] Davis 2002. pp. 35.
[76] Davis 2002. pp. 26.
[77] Davis 2002. pp. 26.

Important to note is that during the time of heightened interest in the Inner Harbor were the city's tougher standards on crime, and the demolition of six crime-ridden public housing towers east of downtown. The lowering of crime, especially in downtown and the Inner Harbor, and removal of nearby public housing helped create a "tourist bubble" or fantasy city were the poor were kept out of view.[78]

Success could also be viewed as changed demographics. Harborplace helped provide an anchor area for the slow conversion of once derelict housing. Yet, such areas provided housing and close access for the poor, often minorities, to reach the new, albeit low paying, jobs in the Inner Harbor. Rehabilitation brought a change in social class as an influx of professionals, typically non-minority people, and the high cost of luxury housing displaced many poor and minority people.

The definition of success often included the creation of jobs, creation of ancillary benefits such as new housing, or increased revenues and tax revenues. In any event, a realistic goal of the UEC was required to be identified in the planning stage. Baltimore's success comes at a large price tag in terms of subsidies to these projects. Those subsidies effectively displaced additional funding for schools, police, social services, economic development, housing, and other governmental functions that might have been more effective in revitalizing downtown than large projects such as UECs.

Despite the political definition of success, there were issues pertaining to the UEC, which made the difference between a thriving retail environment and empty wasted space. Ironically, many of the same factors, which make UEC developments successful, were the same factors used to make suburban shopping malls successful. Summarized below are various issues that determine the success of a UEC development and how the use of UECs as a catalyst for downtown revitalization differs from other developments:[79]

- Design & Comprehensive Plan,
- Investment and Anchors,
- Transit and Transportation, and
- Population.

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[78] Fainstein, Susan and Dennis Judd. 1999.
[79] Flisram 2000. pp. 3.

7.1.1 Design & Comprehensive Plan

A bad design can ruin the best of intentions. Harborplace and the Denver Pavilions were popular, in part, due to their open design, which invited people in and did not disconnect them from the rest of the city. The pavilions at Harborplace were small and connected by an amphitheater, which sat in the center of the development and at one of downtown main intersections. Likewise, the Denver Pavilions were situated on two city blocks and oriented towards the 16th Street pedestrian mall. The multi-leveled center was not enclosed and visitors felt connected to the center and a part of the city at the same time.

However, the Sixth Street Marketplace, which included an ornate bridge that crossed Broad Street, the city's de facto line between white and black neighborhoods, never included more than glass and concrete. The park between the Marketplace and the Coliseum was used for events, but otherwise there was little to view or to feel a part of.

Connectivity was discussed earlier but it is an essential part of the design. Baltimore ensured the success of Harborplace by linking the center to other mixed-use attractions and by making it the main dock for the water taxis, which ferry tourists to other harbor destinations (see Figure 7). Richmond's Sixth Street Marketplace, on the other hand, was not linked to other attractions and the city made few other investments from the Marketplace/Broad Street location. The private investment the city hoped for never materialized. The success of an entertainment retail center, thus, is substantially, if not totally, dependent on nearby or adjacent land uses, a unique structure, and the visitation its neighbors generate.[80]

The UEC should be an expression of the community and the social structure. Too often developers, and planners use signage, especially supersignage, in downtown districts and UECs not as an expression of a diverse social structure, but to provide visitors a frisson of excitement and diversity in an urban space sanitized for suburban tourist families.[81]

In short, a comprehensive plan must be developed for the UEC and the downtown. These plans may include improvements to the street landscape, connections to neighborhoods, trails, transit, and parking. Transportation and parking to the UEC must be available and easy to use. Though many downtowns

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[80] Russell 1997. pp. 90.
[81] Roost 1998. pp. 17.

Figure 7: View of the Inner Harbor from Federal Hill.

Looking north from atop Federal Hill, this picture shows the relationship and connectivity between the various Inner Harbor attractions. The pavilions of Harborplace are center left. Center right are the National Aquarium and the Power Plant development. Note the seasonal ice rink in the foreground. A pedestrian thoroughfare surrounds the harbor connecting the attractions in addition to the water taxi. Located off picture to the lower left in the Maryland Science Museum and IMAX theatre.
Photo source: Computer Chair Traveler.org.

have good highway access to their suburbs, only those UECs with convenient links will survive. In the end, the plan must set a realistic goal for the center and surrounding attractions, which must be planned and developed. It is unrealistic to assume that any development in and of itself can revitalize a downtown.

7.1.2 Investment and Anchors

Building a tourist sector is not a one-time expense. Maintenance, infrastructure, and re-investment continue to demand investment and subsidies, in part to remain competitive with other cities and the suburbs. In addition, re-investment is needed as newer attractions may eclipse older attractions. For example, Norfolk's Waterside, a successful marketplace, began to decline when the city built an enclosed upscale shopping mall, MacArthur Center, within walking distance of Waterside. To save the marketplace, Norfolk paid subsidies upwards of $2.6 million annually to transform the marketplace into a nightlife hub.[82]

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[82] Nuckols 2002.

This relates to the goals of the UEC and what might constitute success. The City of Norfolk decided that paying the subsidy was worth saving Waterside and retaining it as a focal point on the downtown landscape and the riverfront. Maintaining momentum and pedestrian generators in downtown revitalization is as important as the developments themselves.

As stated before, public investments such as grants should not be viewed as giveaways to developers, but as helping downtown to remain competitive in the marketplace. Anchors, such as department stores, are lured to shopping malls, in part, by the offering of free land from the developer. The developer knows that the department store is key to attract business to the mall and its smaller retail stores. Likewise, when downtown needs an anchor to attract business to its smaller retail stores, similar tactics must be used.

Entertainment attractions in downtown Baltimore and Denver have received major subsidies from the public to lure top attractions such as ballparks, conventions centers, hotels, and museums. Though some developments are more successful than others, and some are outright controversial, each development is only one piece in the downtown revitalization puzzle.

Safety and security costs are higher in UECs than other developments such as shopping malls and can be prohibitive. More police and security guards are needed, often to combat perception, than crime in and of itself. The Gallery at MetroTech in downtown Brooklyn is a 150,000 square foot center with security costs nearly one million dollars per year.

7.1.3 Transit and Transportation

High quality transit and transportation connections are a key feature. No development will succeed downtown without efficient, safe, and reliable transportation connections. For better or worse, many cities are left with good connections to freeways and Interstates built during the Urban Renewal era. Baltimore and Denver each are situated near the interchange of major highways. Baltimore has connections to I-95 and I-83, and Denver to I-70 and I-25. These connections provided these cities with easy access for suburban residents to travel downtown, especially after business hours and on weekends when no commuter rush hour existed.

Likewise, downtown parking and transit must be well signed and understandable. Parking also needs to be located at least one block away from the UEC. At Harborplace, no on-site parking is provided at the center. Instead, those parking downtown use nearby lots and walk to the center, which creates a

pedestrian flow. Denver has an efficient bus network, and operated a downtown circulator tourist bus system, which links all the major attractions in the city and downtown, including the ball parks, zoo, and museums. Baltimore also has an expansive bus system and is in the process of developing an intra-city transit system to connect all the waterfront attractions to the existing bus system and light-rail. In addition, Baltimore has taken advantage of the waterfront location of many of its attractions to develop water taxis, which provide regularly scheduled 'cruises' to attractions and waterfront neighborhoods such as Fells Point and Canton. The water taxis thus serve as both a form of transit and a tourist attraction.

In coordination with the Discovery store located in Harborplace, Baltimore has developed a city tour, which uses amphibious 'duck' vehicles and provides connections to museums farther from the waterfront as well as educational tours on the water.

7.1.4 Population

Any development requires a critical mass of population and demand for it to be successful. Shopping malls require a minimum population with enough income to support them based on their size and type of stores. When UECs were first developed, it was hoped that these centers would act as catalysts in downtown revitalization. This was true for only the largest cities, such as Baltimore and Boston where they used the momentum of their UEC developments to lead to other developments and attractions, while medium sized cities such as Richmond, Flint, Mich., and Toledo, Ohio failed in similar attempts. Norfolk was the exception to failure as it aggressively sponsored large metropolitan-inclusive events such as Harborfest, and developments such as the high-rise Marriott hotel.

In addition, the inhabitants of the metropolitan area, even if they have convenient access to downtown and the UEC, must reflect the right demographics needed to support a UEC. The demographics depend on the type of center proposed and its goals, but they include education, income, race, and crime.

Harborplace was successful because Baltimore contained a large user base of employees, captive users such as downtown residents, and a tough stance on crime, at least in the tourist areas of the Inner Harbor. Attracting these demographics is often at odds with using the UEC as a center of public activity open and inclusive to all. It also differs from other developments in that the UEC often becomes a focal point or advertising image for the city's downtown, in effect catering to the critical mass of tourists in addition to metropolitan residents.

In addition, public support can make or break the project. In Baltimore, Harborplace could be viewed as a 'feel good' project designed to inspire pride in a city that was declining and was soon to lose its football team. At a time when things were dim for Baltimore, the Inner Harbor offered one bright spot.

Likewise, the Denver Pavilions, built to add life to the city after business hours, became the place to have dinner and a drink downtown, and seemed to echo other successes in Denver such as Coors Field, a superbowl championship team, and continued redevelopment of funds.

Conversely, Richmond could not base the success or failure of its downtown on the lack of a major league professional sports teams. Instead, the Marketplace failed due to its lack of a population base able to support it and to continued racial problems in the city.

7.1.5 Summary

The UECs and entertainment retail, which can combine entertainment options, history, retail, and unique architecture, can be an effective tool to revitalize downtowns by drawing in large quantities of visitors. However, such developments should be viewed as only one tool, which is often more effectively used in larger cities and in combination with other attractions and investments. In order for the UEC to succeed, a comprehensive plan for the UEC and downtown center must be developed to include transportation and connections to surrounding neighborhoods and developments, which include safe, convenient, affordable parking, open space, trails, transit, and highways. The UEC should be designed towards these connections, and as part of the city instead of a stand-alone destination. Likewise, no one mega-project, like a UEC or ballpark, or hotel, should be expected to revitalize a downtown. Investment in downtowns involves time, public dollars, and motivated developers and residents.

The UEC is one essential piece of the entertainment and tourist puzzle of cities redefining their cores towards the tourist and convention market; however the jobs created through such service-oriented developments will not make up for jobs lost through the decline of industry or professional services. The creation of jobs should not be the sole objective of any downtown development.

Unlike enclosed shopping malls, UECs are often melded with public space such that the line between the two becomes blurred. These developments should not be seen as a true representation of the urban form, which allow free expression, but as marketing and entertainment districts. However, the open

designs of UEC allow better connections to the surrounding land uses than the enclosed inward-oriented shopping mall or closed off pedestrian mall.

8.0 Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to identify and define a trend among cities of the use of Urban Entertainment Centers in urban revitalization. Presented were discussions of the history, and events that led to the decline of downtowns, and some of the various methods cities have used to generate and stimulate growth. Two case studies, Baltimore and Denver, were presented. These cities, despite their different histories, have arrived at the same conclusion for revitalizing their downtowns, and both cities experiences are considered successful by city planners and local officials. Also discussed were several issues surrounding the implementation of UECs.

Still, despite the examination of the UEC and research into cities that have employed various entertainment venues in downtown locations, it is not possible to clearly create a standard definition of Urban Entertainment Center or how, if at all, it truly differs from the festival marketplace or simply the suburban mall experience in a downtown location. While many of the entertainment options often cited began as stand-alone venues located in existing theatre districts of a few major cities, it was soon discovered that collocating these new venues could itself be a new district. This collation concept became the 'urban entertainment' district.

This lack of a one-size-fits-all standard may be due to the promoters of the UEC concept, the real estate developers, who shuffle the identity of these projects with whatever new buzzword comes along. Thus if a city was hesitantly thinking of a festival marketplace, well, add a multiplex and a few restaurants, and boom, urban entertainment center. Admittedly this is a rather cynical view of developers and multiplex patrons. Or perhaps the lack of a standard may be due to the unique and individual needs of each downtown.

Take for instance the cities of Baltimore, Norfolk, and Denver. Baltimore's Inner Harbor began life as a festival marketplace, but has been lauded as a festival marketplace, a tourist center, and a UEC as the focus of Harborplace and the Inner Harbor became less about retail and more about restaurants and nightclubs. This shift of from retail to entertainment poses the question of whether entertainment, and

thus the UEC, was an extension or natural evolution of the festival marketplace or simply a remarketed approach to saving a revitalization project that was fading?

In Norfolk, Waterside much like Harborplace began as a festival marketplace, and while still viewed as a success by Norfolk city leaders, Waterside has evolved from a mixture of eclectic shops and restaurants to primarily house theme restaurants, nightclubs and an upscale billiards hall. The shift in focus at Waterside will do doubt continue as downtown Norfolk retail, for the moment, shifts towards the new mall, MacArthur Center, situated a few blocks away. Thus, similar to Harborplace, the question seems fair to ask whether the choice of retooling Waterside into an entertainment venue was intentional to accommodate late-night partygoers and visitors, or a last attempt ploy to keep any type of business that would draw people in the Waterside pavilions.

Likewise in Denver, the Pavilions were heralded as helping Denver become a 24-hour city with entertainment and dining options for residents and visitors and with that bringing more life to city streets and in return increase sales at downtown shops. However, one cannot escape the location of the Pavilions along the 16th Street Mall, a pedestrian and transit mall, as ironic considering the mall is lined with other faded projects, including the mall itself. While the 16th Street Mall and its free shuttle bus remain popular with downtown workers, the project is home to some of Denver's other urban revitalizations projects, which like the Pavilions, have promised to return people to downtown such as Larimer Square and the Tabor Center. However, while the other projects declined none ever went completely dead hanging on by a few solid restaurants that took hold. In fact, it is of particular interest that Larimer Square, now home to roughly a half dozen nightclubs, and the Tabor Center, home to ESPNzone, have also turned to entertainment options to revitalize and compete with the Pavilions.

The use of entertainment and the UEC concept in Baltimore, Norfolk, and Denver presents interesting questions as what exactly is being revitalized, the downtown of the city or the former and failing revitalization attempt. Indeed, how much money was continually be spent on the latest concept or fad or how much lost through tax incentives to keep the city alive or at a minimum on life support. It is a depressing dilemma topic for planners, city officials, and residents alike.

It is a certainty that the UEC will know failure, it is also important to differentiate between the individual venue and the concept of entertainment retail or urban entertainment districts. The failure of Planet Hollywood and other theme restaurants should not be seen as a failure of the blend of entertainment and the retail and restaurant businesses, but that even in a new concept; a company cannot escape

common business principles regarding quality, expansion, and finance. This business principle mimics those of Broadway, just as the closure of one show on Broadway does not signal an end to live theatre. It could, of course, signal changes in tastes or attitudes which would need to be resolved through the application and adjustment of business models. Unfortunately, the larger issue then of a business failure in the UEC would be to mitigate the failure either through replacement, such as a new restaurant, or through another use. The unfortunate part is that this then plays in the never-ending cycle of what comes next, for is the UEC was the mitigation for the festival marketplace or downtown mall, then what is to replace the UEC?

It is easy to understand the concept of entertainment mixed with retail use. Venues such as the Hard Rock Café , Planet Hollywood, ESPNzone, and the Disney Store have chiefly used the blend of entertainment and retail to sell their food or merchandise, but also to manipulate the consumer and blur the lines between reality and fantasy. This blurring of fantasy and reality was in a sense revealed to us in the suburban shopping mall. The shopping mall served as the artificial environment which provided an urban or 'main street' sensation without the negative drawbacks city life, such as panhandlers or trash on the streets. The addition to shopping malls of entertainment options of their own such as multiplex movies and food courts, further blurred the lines as more of the realm of the city became indoors and sanitized.   In addition these malls skewed the perceptions of people towards life in the city. New generations of people who were raised in the suburbs and malls and whose only glimpses of downtown occurred during the evening news began to expect that the downtown streets and shops mimic those of the suburban shopping mall. It is indeed ironic.

Despite the comparisons to past urban revitalizations attempts and worries of failure the UEC does serve a purpose and while the location and design of the UEC, in one hand, bridges the cultural attractions, offices, and other downtown venues, it in the other hand provides a feeling of the suburbs in an urban setting. The UEC therefore is part of that blur between shopping mall and the city street which gives one the sense of being downtown and 'in the city', but really in the same type of programmed environment as in a shopping mall. Only in the UEC, every design is geared towards the selling of product or service, with nothing left to chance.

Is there a difference between the festival marketplace and the UEC? At the end of the day, perhaps there isn't much of one, despite the emphasis of the UEC on entertainment, movies, and theme restaurants. This in many ways is exactly the point. For a downtown to consider a UEC in addition to a past project, either to save it or enhance it, the point is that it is downtown ultimately that would be

saved or enhanced. The notion that the UEC is not that different from anything else then serves to its advantage when blending into downtown and being used to collate next to museums, malls, offices, or even sports arenas.

As to the use of the UEC as a catalyst for downtown revitalization, the jury is still out. It is not possible in these early years of development to categorically say whether the concept will hold up over time. However, looking at the history of other downtown revitalization concepts and projects such as , the enclosed mall, the pedestrian mall, the festival marketplace, it is not a leap to suggest that there will indeed be UEC successes and failures just as the other downtown revitalization projects have both succeeded and failed. But for visitors, downtown workers and residents, the UEC provides a new life for downtown and opportunities to become involved in the urban experience that weren't there before. Even if city purists view that urban experience is a bit sanitized.

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10.0 Vita

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