

NEW SHERIFF IN (DOWN)TOWN?: BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS AND THE
REGULATION OF PUBLIC SPACES

A CASE STUDY OF SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

by

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ABSTRACT
NEW SHERIFF IN (DOWN)TOWN?: BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS AND THE
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This study examines Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) in Seattle, WA. While the literature on BIAs continues to grow, interestingly, very few studies have been performed on BIAs in west coast cities, as the mass preponderance of the BIA literature body within the United States has focused on east coast cities. Thus, the first purpose of this study is to provide a comparative analysis of Seattle BIAs. This analysis describes the formation, organizational structure, geographic size, budget size, and service programming of each BIA in Seattle. In addition, this thesis also briefly assesses the accountability, the democratic nature, and the potential of BIAs in Seattle to engender or exacerbate inequalities within the urban landscape. The second purpose of this thesis is to examine Seattle’s largest BIA, the Metropolitan Improvement District (MID), and its projects, programming, and partnerships. I argue that that the MID is a significant apparatus in the continued privatization of public spaces and creation of “pseudo-private” spaces in Seattle. My analysis suggests that the MID increasingly has set up and rolled out “innovative” regulatory mechanisms through increasingly complex partnerships with the municipal government to manage downtown public spaces in an effort to remake the city for passive consumption rather than allow for active participation and appropriation.

Those outside of achieving this goal are deemed problematic, seen as an anathema to redevelopment scheme and therefore must be regulated or removed. This exclusionary focus limits outside individuals' – more commonly homeless persons - right to the city by truncating their ability to move through and make use of urban public space. In addition, the MID also is focused on regulating demonstrators and other participants engaged in political actions.

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DEDICATION

To my mom, Idenne Margaret Whetsel (née Leslie), the strongest person I know.

Keep up the good fight.

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LIST OF NOMENCLATURE:

Business Improvement Area (BIA)

Business Improvement District (BID)

Columbia City Business Improvement District (CCBIA)

Community Improvement District (CID)

Downtown Seattle Association (DSA)

Denny Regrade Business Improvement District (DRBIA)

First and Second Avenue Business Improvement District (FSABIA)

Human Services Department (HSD)

Metropolitan Improvement District (MID)

Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)

Office of Economic Development (OED)

Pioneer Square Business Improvement District (PSBID)

Second Chance Program (SCP)

Seattle Police Department (SPD)

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Questions

“No matter what brings you to Downtown Seattle – to live, to work, to shop or to play – you’re part of an exciting change taking shape all around us, which will transform our Downtown for generations.”

A former Downtown Seattle Association
President and CEO (DSA Economic Report 2014)

Downtowns are rapidly changing and, as the quote above stresses, these changes will ultimately have profound and lasting ramifications for decades to come. One area in the city of Seattle that has undergone a sizable change in the past two decades is the Westlake area, commonly denoted as the “retail core” of the city (see Image 1 below). Today, the Westlake area is an incredibly bustling place.

Commonly witnessed in the area are large groups of shoppers frequenting retail giants and boutiques; tourists hauling roller-bags of luggage to upscale hotels; corporate professionals on their daily business pursuits; and young residents enjoying coffee while their children play in the newly christened Westlake Park children’s playground “to get their wiggles out so you can go back shopping” (“Kids’ play area,” 2014).

In line with neoliberal shifts and entrepreneurial urban governance, many of these new downtown developments in the Westlake area utilized municipal funding in efforts to attract footloose capital and investments (Harvey 1989; Peck and Tickell 1994, Peck and Theodore 2002, Peck and Tickell 2002). Since 1991, the greater Westlake area has witnessed the development of several megaprojects funded by over \$700 million in public “seed money,” including the construction of a Niketown store (\$25 million), the Benaroya Music Center (\$118 million), the Seattle Art Museum (\$61 million), a Nordstrom flagship store (\$100 million), the expansion

of the Convention Center (part of a \$170 million project), and the creation of the Pacific Place Retail-Cinema Complex and Parking Garage, for which the City of Seattle financed over \$110 million to build and operate (\$248 million) (Gibson 2004, 3). Furthermore, in an effort to increase economic growth, provide incentives for

Image 1: *Map of Downtown Seattle*



Feature Key: Red star indicates Westlake Park; blue box indicates the Pike-Pine Corridor; green star indicates Occidental Park. Source: Downtown Seattle Association, retrieved from: <http://www.downtownseattle.org>. Features were added by the Author.

growing tech and service-sector companies, and increase “livability” within the downtown, during the last decade, Seattle pursued several large public

infrastructure projects, including the Link Light Rail system, the Aurora tunnel project, and the South Lake Union streetcar system. The combination of these new developments near Westlake spurred significant new residential, commercial, and retail investment within the downtown. In fact, redevelopments like Westlake have helped garner Seattle numerous city national awards and top accolades, such as “America’s Favorite City,” “Most-liked U.S. City,” “Best City for tech growth” and one of the “Best Cities for good jobs” (Public Policy Polling 2012, 2013; Forbes 2013, 2013).

Alongside the shoppers, business professionals, and residents described above, also present in the Westlake area are two other notable groups: the homeless - in particular homeless youth - and the Clean and Safe Ambassadors of the local downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA), the Metropolitan Improvement District (MID). BIAs, defined in further detail below and in Chapter Two, are privately managed but publicly authorized entities that provide supplementary public services to a designated area financed through an involuntary assessment on business and property owners within that area. The MID, located downtown, is one of the largest BIAs in Seattle, in terms of geographic coverage, budget size, and services offered. Dressed in dark blue and bright yellow military-like fatigues, the MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors are, in essence, the “rank and file” or self-described “eyes and ears” of the MID, and by extension the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA), the largest business association in Seattle, of which the MID is an umbrella entity (discussed in more detail in Chapter Five). The purpose of the MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors is multifaceted. On one hand the MID Clean and Safe

Ambassadors provide so-called hospitality services, such as directing disoriented tourists to their next sightseeing destination. Another key function of the MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors is to clean and maintain the streetscapes and public areas within the downtown, for example, taking care of overflowing trash cans, power-washing sidewalks, and cleaning graffiti-marked parking meters. MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors also help facilitate and manage a range of “Positive Activation” programs, i.e., concert series, streetscaping, and placement of outdoor furniture and Ping-Pong tables. Significantly, many of the MID Clean Ambassadors are homeless or formerly homeless individuals (MID Interview B, Kim 2001, DSA website “MID receives award”). In spite of this status (or perhaps because of), MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors are also involved in providing “welfare check-ins” and social service referrals to homeless individuals. In addition, MID Safe and Clean Ambassadors are also in close communication with the Seattle Police Department (SPD). As part of this partnership, MID Safe and Clean Ambassadors commonly relay information and data on “problematic” individuals and activities to the SPD’s attention, as well as call upon SPD services when in need of enforcing city ordinances with individuals unwilling to comply with the directives of MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors.

Proponents of BIAs herald programs like the MID’s Clean and Safe Ambassadors as “showing that private interest and the public good can coincide,” proclaiming that BIA organizations “provid[e] a model of efficient public services which governments should emulate” (MacDonald 1996, para. 18). However, critics view BIA programming and functions much more dubiously, claiming that ambassadors are essentially articulations, apparatuses, and enforcers of neoliberal

revanchist agendas in the post-industrial city (Miraftab 2007, Ward 2007).

Accordingly, BIA programming is largely understood to be a way in which hegemonic powers “socially sanitize urban public spaces for greater marketability in the global economy” (Miraftab 2007, 603, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006).

For the past few decades, attracting the middle class and the so-called “creative class” back to the city, both as residents and consumers, has been a principal focus of urban redevelopment strategies in the U.S. and elsewhere (Florida 2004, Zukin 1991, Reichl 1999, Peck 2005). With this mission in mind, many local governments and businesses elites have turned to (re)constructing cities and priming public spaces to cater to, attract, and retain global capital and consumers. In an effort to do this, many urban growth coalitions¹ turned to private-public ventures in an effort to spur growth and development, especially in entertainment, retail, and cultural sectors (Molotch 1976, Harvey 1989, Reichl 1999, Florida 2002, Peck 2005, Hoyt and Agge-Gopal 2007). These new forms of partnerships blur the lines between the private and the public, representing a “new governance paradigm” largely in line with the neoliberal principals of government retrenchment, privatization, and entrepreneurial investments (Peck and Tickell 2002). One modus increasingly utilized in contemporary urban governance to oversee and manage public spaces is the Business Improvement Area (BIA), more commonly known as the Business Improvement District (BID) or as the Community

¹ The term growth coalitions refers to the formal and informal actors, i.e., municipal officials, business elites, media groups, utilities, and others that, although potentially divergent on a multitude of other local issues, unite around the shared concern for local economic growth, in particular, the increased value of property within the growth machine’s area of interest. For more on the growth machine literature see Molotch (1976), Logan and Molotch (2007), and Jonas and Wilson (1999)

Improvement District (CID). From this point forward, I will refer to these types of entities as BIAs for simplicity purposes. I am using BIAs as it is the terminology utilized in Seattle to describe these entities. The following section will give a brief overview of BIAs. A much more nuanced look at BIAs can be found in Chapter Three.

BIAs in Brief

Although by no means new players in contemporary urban governance, BIAs remain highly understudied. First developed in the late 1960s, BIAs have become increasingly popular in cities experiencing budget pressures in an era of neoliberal economic restructuring. The utilization of BIAs has grown rapidly over the past 30 years in the United States, as well as internationally: in 1999, it was estimated that there were some 1200 plus BIA- like organizations in operation globally (Mitchell 1999). Given this dynamic growth, BIAs are unmistakably “important actors in the revalorization of the built environment” of downtowns (Ward 2007). However, there are some prominent disagreements regarding the legacy and nature of BIAs. The following quotes concisely encapsulate the oppositional discourses surrounding BIA organizations:

“The BID model is popular largely because it works...BIDs are more effective and efficient than traditional models of local governance and because of their success, BIDs have become the means for revitalizing America’s downtowns.” (Hochleutner 2003, p. 2)

“BIDs are a manifestation of old social and geographic relationships of exclusion and marginalization in the city... the marginalization that existed de facto is now being transformed into legally protected boundaries within the city...” (McFarlane 2003, p. 32)

These two quotes illustrate the obvious fissures amongst researchers in regards to the roles and success of BIAs.

Briefly, the BIA concept works as follows: state and municipal governments publicly authorize BIAs to provide economic development programs and supplemental public services. Though publicly authorized, BIAs are privately managed and thus are said to “blur the lines” between the private and the public, representing a “new governance paradigm” (Hoyt and Agge-Gopal 2007). BIAs function in an established geographical area within the city predetermined by the majority support of local property and business owners in that area. Through an involuntary, monetary assessment of local businesses and property owners, BIAs provide an assortment of “supplementary” services, typically including sanitation and safety services, aesthetic additions, and marketing programs. Proponents of the BIA system believe that BIAs offer efficient, creative, and area-sensitive responses to the myriad of contemporary urban challenges (MacDonald 1996, Briffault 1999, Mitchell 1999, Hochleitner 2003). Conversely, opponents raise critical concerns about BIAs in regards to their accountability, their undemocratic nature, their ability to exacerbate deep-rooted urban inequalities, and finally, their ability to (over) regulate public spaces (Mallet 1994, McFarlane 2003, Schaller and Modan2006, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, Miraftab 2007, Ward 2007).

Study Overview and Research Questions:

The purpose of this thesis is multifaceted. First, the thesis provides an overview of BIAs in Seattle. Little to no research has been performed on BIAs within

Seattle, or in the west coast of the U.S. in general (but see Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, Stokes 2006, Marquardt and Fuller 2012). Furthermore, little attention has been given to multiple BIAs within a single municipality (Hoyt 2005, Lewis 2010, Ward 2007), as most studies focus on one particular BIA or provide comparative studies of two different BIAs, commonly in different cities (Miraftab 2007, Schaller and Modan 2006, Michel 2012). Given this lack of attention, this thesis provides information on BIAs that “remain largely off the screen” and at a scale typically unstudied within the existing body of literature (Michel 2013, Ward 2007). This thesis engages in the following questions:

- 1) What is the history, organization, and geography of BIAs in Seattle? How do Seattle BIAs connect and contrast with the typical configurations of metropolitan BIDs/BIAs?
- 2) How do Seattle BIAs regulate urban space and homelessness in the context of neoliberal restructuring and development? Are BIAs connected to the privatization of public space, or according to Mitchell and Staeheli (2006) the creation of “pseudo private spaces,” in Seattle?

This thesis contributes to the current literature body on BIAs and public space regulation (Stymes and Steel 2005, Schaller and Modan 2005, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, Miraftab 2007, Lipper and Sleiman 2012, Ward 2007, Marquardt and Fuller 2012). While opponents of BIAs are quick to pronounce BIAs as regulators of public spaces, empirically, there have only been a handful of studies that examine the issue at length by looking at elements of BIAs such as discursive programs (Michel 2013, Miraftab 2007), BIA representational strategies (Ward 2007, Marquardt and Fuller

2012) and BIA spatial practices in connection to public space regulation (Miraftab 2007, Schaller and Modan 2005, Staeheli and Mitchell 2006).

In one of the more in depth studies on the subject matter, Mitchell and Staeheli (2006) investigated the nexus between the politics of public space, changing property regimes, and the (re)regulation of public space, looking particularly at the role of BIAs in connection to large scale redevelopments and the management of the homeless in San Diego. The authors stipulate that through a changing “property regime,” a new definition of public space is being forged in contemporary cities, asserting that BIA managed areas are increasingly turning into “pseudo-private spaces,” or spaces that are owned by the state, and by extension the people, but are regulated and controlled by private interests. This changing property regime alters the very nature of what is public, changing the regime of property, or as the authors state, changing the “practices, laws, and meanings that formally and informally determine the exact nature of a property right” (Staeheli and Mitchell 2006, 149). Compounding this, Marquardt and Fuller (2011) urged that “specific sets of measures chosen by local BIDs and their concrete strategies for revitalizing the inner city are highly context sensitive” and that given this sensitivity, additional place-based BIA research is warranted to illuminate the “strategies with which BIAs target specific urban populations...in what direction and by what means they seek to govern the uses and users of public spaces” (12). This thesis builds from the insights of Mitchell and Staeheli (2006) and Marquardt and Fuller (2011). Heeding the call for more academic investigations on BIA programming, I examine BIAs in Seattle, with a particular focus on the MID, Seattle’s largest BIA, and its

relationship to the redevelopment of the downtown and the management of public spaces.

Methodological Approach

As noted above, this thesis involves case study research of BIAs in Seattle with a specific focus on the MID. Critiques on the use of case studies are generally twofold: first, case studies are perceived as inherently lacking objectivity; and secondly, some argue that it is difficult to make generalizations from case study research beyond the purview of the study (Stoecker, 1991). Yet, even with these critiques, the case study remains the best way to “refine general theory and apply effective interventions in complex settings” (Stoecker, 1991, 89). In an effort to curb criticisms leveled at case studies, Stoecker (1991) suggested adding additional legitimacy by “triangulating” findings by performing multi-methodological research for a case study. Following this recommendation, I triangulated my research methods by combining interviews, content and discourse analysis of archival materials, including local newspaper articles and BIA website materials, and field investigation and participant observation in public spaces in which the MID, as well as the Pioneer Square BIA, is active.

Thus, the project draws from a range of sources to examine BIAs in Seattle. Interviews were a critical part of my analysis because they provided the opportunity to understand how BIA officials framed and discussed BIA programming. In total, I held seven interviews with a range of BIA-involved actors and city representatives. I interviewed one high-ranking managerial representative from the Pioneer Square

BIA; one representative involved in the founding and the current management of the Columbia City BIA; one high-level managerial representative from the MID; two mid-level managerial representatives from the MID; one current ratepayer of the MID, who was also highly active in two of the earlier downtown Seattle BIAs (First and Second Avenue BIA and the Denny Regrade BIA); and one representative from the City of Seattle's Office of Economic Development (OED) who acts as a liaison between the OED, Seattle BIAs, and other various neighborhood business entities. For the interviews, I gathered information about potential contacts through BIA websites and the City of Seattle website. I then contacted potential interviewees via email detailing my project and asking about setting up a possible interview. This technique of recruitment also let me connect with the MID ratepayer as well.

All interviews took place in August of 2014 and were held face-to-face in locations chosen by the interviewees. The interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions (Appendix A). This format allowed BIA, ratepayers, and OED representatives to provide their own answers and elaborate on their understandings of the interview questions (Babbie 2012). The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed to allow for more detailed and verbatim statements from the interviewees. To protect confidentiality, interviewees will remain anonymous and will be identified only by their professional roles and or affiliation with a particular organization. To differentiate between interviewees from the same organization I will identify interviewees by an additional letter designation.

The reasons that I interviewed staff members from these particular Seattle BIAs were twofold. First, the interviewees represent a range of BIA sizes, one large, one mid-sized, and one small, according to Gross' typology of BIAs (Gross 2005, see Chapter Four). Second, interviewing multiple BIAs allowed for a broader understanding of Seattle BIAs and BIA relations. As the primary focus of this thesis centered around the MID, the majority of the interviewees were MID representatives or MID ratepayers. In analyzing these interviews, following the Grounded Method Theory, I looked for common themes and coded them appropriately into organized groupings and subgroupings (Babbie 2012). In brief, BIA interviewees (OED questions were slightly different) were asked to identify and explain the following: 1) motivations behind the creation of their particular BIA; 2) the contemporary significance of their BIA; 3) their BIAs' relationships with City of Seattle departments, i.e., the OED and Seattle Police Department, as well as their relationships with other BIAs within the city, 4) the short and long term goals of their BIAs, and finally, 5) to discuss the programming of their BIAs, in particular programs focused on maintenance, cleaning and safety, and social services outreach.

I triangulated this interview data with a discourse analysis of over 70 newspaper articles from mainstream press outlets, such as the *Seattle Times*, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, and smaller local business journals such as the *Puget Sound Business Journal*, as well as from alternative press outlets, such as *The Stranger*, *Seattle Weekly*, *Seattle Magazine*, and *Real Change*. Articles were selected based upon their focus on Seattle urban governance, homelessness in Seattle, the DSA, BIAs, and the MID. As with the analysis of interviews, I coded for key terms and

themes dealing with how the economic state of the City of Seattle was presented, how homeless individuals and panhandlers were presented, how and why Seattle BIAs were initially presented, how BIA programming was presented, and how the conditions and management of public spaces were presented. To further supplement these sources, I collected data from official municipal government documents, official BIA documents, website content, Washington state legislation, and City of Seattle Common Council ordinances. Finally, I also performed several observational field investigations in the Westlake area, the Pike-Pine corridor, and Occidental Park in Pioneer Square. These observational field investigations included visiting public areas in which the MID is active. In each area I spent about thirty minutes taking detailed field notes of my observations. I performed these observational field investigations twice. I observed these three particular areas on foot as they were commonly acknowledged in the interviews with MID representatives as MID “hotspots”² and were denoted as areas that received high levels of MID programming. Importantly, these MID designated hotspots also coincide with areas in the city that are currently undergoing (or earmarked to go undergo) significant large-scale development projects.

There were several research limitations for this study. One limitation was the sample of interviewees I selected. All interviewees were representatives or ratepayers of Seattle BIAs or worked with the City’s OED. While time constraints

² The term “hotspots” was used by many of the MID interviewees to identify areas of the downtown they believed were nodes of problematic behaviors, such as aggressive panhandling, lie-and-sit infractions, open drug markets, and other intimidating, albeit not necessarily illegal, behaviors. Areas frequently denoted as hotspots by MID interviewees include: Westlake, the Pike-Pine Corridor, and Occidental Park, amongst others.

limited the scope of this research project, future research on this subject matter could be bolstered by holding additional interviews with subjects from other vantages. For example, for a more rounded and nuanced discussion of Seattle BIAs and public space regulation might include interviews with representatives from the Seattle Police Department, homeless individuals, political organizers, and local social service providers. Furthermore, because this research is a case study of Seattle area BIAs only, there is a limited ability to generalize the results and findings of this study beyond the city of Seattle.

Study Findings in Brief

My research highlights how BIAs in Seattle, while sharing considerable policy overlap with BIAs in other cities, are geographically contingent and grounded in a particular local context. Seattle is well-known as a liberal, progressive city. Yet it also has an extended history of being “a leader in techniques of spatial exclusion,” having established some of the earliest, most extensive, and most punitive anti-homeless laws in the country (Herbert 2011,95; Mitchell 2003). Likewise, BIAs in Seattle largely appear to be extensions and leaders of “innovative” spatial and representative exclusionary mechanisms. Increasingly, BIAs in Seattle, in partnership with the municipal government, are creating and implementing additional and more complex public space regulatory mechanisms than those previously described by Mitchell and Staeheli (2006) and Marquardt and Fuller (2011). In the end, my research corresponds with Mitchell and Staeheli’s (2006) claim that these new property regimes do not signify the “end of public space” but

rather the *redefinition* of public space. This reworking of public space, or shifts in the “nature of laws that govern space,” ultimately determines “the sort of autonomy” that certain individuals may possess (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, 151).

In Seattle, the result of this redefinition is the truncation of the autonomy and agency of the homeless through MID programming and increasingly through the BIA’s participation in “innovative partnerships”³ with local municipal services. I argue that these new “innovative partnerships” are increasingly more complex and interdependent and therefore exemplify the continued blurring of the lines between private entities and the municipal government. MID programming can be seen as a way to regulate behaviors in public spaces that align with a particular notion of public spaces and a particular aesthetic. These programs include, but are not limited to, Clean and Safe Ambassadors, the Multi-Disciplinary Team, Homeless Hiring, involvement with the Seattle Community Court, and “Positive Activations,” or the representative and entertainment programming of the MID. Given this ability, MID programming serves as a regulatory mechanism that limits the ability of certain individuals to access and utilize public spaces in the downtown. Furthermore, MID programs also limit democratic processes such as access to planning and spaces for demonstration. My findings correspond to Miraftab’s (2007) argument that these entities ultimately “promote uneven social and spatial development characteristic of neoliberal spatiality (603)” and are therefore key elements of ushering in neoliberal and revanchist programs.

³ The term “innovative partnerships” was frequently utilized by representatives from the MID to describe the MID’s involvement in new private-public partnerships programs with local municipal entities and social service providers, in particular MID involvement in the City Center Initiative, which will be discussed in length in subsequent chapters.

Structure of Thesis and Chapter Outline

As described above, this thesis examines Seattle BIAs, looking specifically at the largest BIA in the downtown, the MID, and its programming in relation to urban neoliberalization and the changing nature of public space. Chapter Two offers a review of scholarship in geography and urban studies focused on neoliberalism and urban restructuring, the politics of public space, and the Right to the City. Extending this focus, Chapter Two also introduces the BIA concept and provides an overview of the current BIA literature and its linkages to the politics of public space. Chapter Three describes the background for my empirical study in Seattle. In particular, this chapter outlines the downtown crises that Seattle has faced over the past few decades and connects these shifts to current redevelopment programs in the city. This chapter illuminates the “mobilization of the spectacle”⁴ and the “projects of reassurance”⁵ undertaken by city elites and other key actors involved in urban governance in Seattle (Harvey 1987, Gibson 2004). Chapter Four extends this empirical examination through an analysis of the history, organization, programming, and services offered by the BIAs within the City of Seattle. Chapter Five investigates the MID. In particular, it examines MID regulatory mechanisms and practices. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the thesis by discussing the

⁴ Mobilization of the spectacle refers to post-industrial economic restructuring focused on consumptive practices and the display of commodity (Harvey 1987).

⁵ Projects of reassurance refer to corollaries to revitalization strategies pursued by growth machines under the spectacle of mobilization. Part ideological and part physical, projects of reassurance are, according to Gibson (2004), the cleansing of “areas of the city slated for middle class consumption...of anything which might evoke in the middle-class imagination images of danger, disorder, and urban decay” (155).

implications of my findings and recommendations for further research on the subject matter.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Reviews

This chapter begins with a general discussion on neoliberal urban restructuring. Using this foundation as a springboard, the remainder of the chapter provides an overview of the two bodies of literature necessary for this project. After the introduction of neoliberalism, I examine the literature pertaining to BIAs.⁶ This discussion introduces BIAs and considers how their emergence is connected to neoliberal urban restructuring. I further discuss BIA organizational underpinnings and characteristics and how they are implicated with an entrepreneurial form of urban governance. Next, I briefly explore the emergence of the first BIAs in Canada and the United States and provide an overview of the current research on BIAs. Throughout this discussion, I consider some of the key controversies surrounding BIAs, such as their discursive practices, their democratic nature and accountability, their potential to facilitate service inequalities and the increased balkanization of the city, and their potential to increase regulation of public spaces.

The third part of this chapter includes a review of the literature focused on the politics of public space and the Right to the City. This section provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of this scholarship, tracing its genus back to Henri Lefebvre. Additionally, this section situates contemporary discourses of urban insecurities and crime, the ascendancy and implications of market-driven

⁶ As a reminder, for simplicity purposes, for this study I use the term Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to denote the various articulations of these types of entities, such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Community Improvement Districts (CIDs). I am using BIAs as it is the terminology used in Seattle.

citizenship, and the increased privatization of public space within a neoliberal context. These themes will then be linked back to BIA formation, structure, and proliferation.

Examining Neoliberal Urban Restructuring

In the waning decades of the twentieth century, the capitalist system experienced several crises that gave rise to significant shifts in urban governance. During the 1970s, the combination of stagflation, relative small economic growth, and the (increased) globalization of world markets triggered a period of economic anxiety (Knox et al 2014, Gibson 2004). In this time of economic uncertainty, cities experienced a range of new challenges, such as increased suburbanization, deindustrialization, globalization, declining municipal tax bases and budgets, industrial and sectorial restructuring, high unemployment, and declining central business districts (Harvey, 1989, Peck and Tickell 1994, Hackworth 2007, Gibson 2004, Knox et al 2014). Additionally, retreating federal revenues further constrained municipal budgets, further diminishing assets and spending power.

During this period of economic crisis, many firms and corporations shifted to more “flexible” modes of production (Harvey 1989, Peck and Tickell 1994, Jessop 2001, Brenner and Theodore 2002). A significant aspect of this new program of “flexibility” was the capacity to leverage a company’s geographic mobility, or “footloose” nature, by moving or threatening to move firms to locations with more conducive conditions for corporations, such as fewer corporate taxes, less restrictive labor policies, and fewer restrictive environmental policies (Harvey

1989, Peck and Tickell 1994, Theodore and Brenner 2002, Gibson 2004). In response to this increased flexibility, many governments (on multiple scales) pursued new policies aimed at fostering conditions that pandered to and attracted footloose capital, i.e., emulating the business friendly conditions of the locations that firms were threatening to move to; these policies often included corporate tax incentives, infrastructure projects, deregulation, and the creation of favorable labor regulations for corporations. Collectively, these actions marked the transition from post-war Fordist-Keynesian capitalism to the advent of neoliberalism.

In the contemporary landscape, as Peck and Tickell (2002) stressed, “Neoliberalism seems to be everywhere” (380). Neoliberalism is the “the dominant political and ideological form of capitalist globalization” whose hallmark features endeavor to foster more “business friendly” conditions for multinational corporations, global finance capital, and other forms of footloose capital (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011, 16, Harvey 1989, Peck and Tickell 2002, Brenner and Theodore 2002). Drawing inspiration from utopian visions of market rule influenced by conservative seventeenth and eighteenth century economic models espoused by the likes of Adam Smith and John Locke (Brenner and Theodore 2002, Low and Smith 2006), the hallmarks of neoliberal ideology include strong emphases on competitive, “unregulated” free trade, increased privatization of the public service sector, deregulation of state interference and control over industries, minimization of state sponsored programming (particularly welfare), disempowerment of organized labor, open-markets and increased internationalization, cutbacks on corporate taxes, and “the intensification of inter-

locality competition, and the criminalization of the poor” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350)

Neoliberal restructuring profoundly changed, and continues to shape, the urban environment (Harvey 1989, Peck and Tickell 1994, Brenner and Theodore 2002). In an early articulation of this restructuring, Harvey (1989) denoted the shift in urban governance from the managerial to what he termed the entrepreneurial governance structure. In contrast to the managerial, entrepreneurial governance directed energies away from delivering social and service provisions to practicing entrepreneurial methods of economic growth aimed to “maximize the attractiveness of the local site as a lure for capitalist development” (Harvey 1989, 457). Localities endeavoring to “lure” mobile capital commonly implore tactics such as tax incentives, infrastructure updates, and other accommodations for businesses, and are thus said to be “supply side” rather than “demand side” interventions (Jessop 1995). Many scholars argue that these incentives and “supply side” state interventions facilitate the “race to the bottom” or are a “zero sum game” as the entrepreneurial efforts to create lucrative incentives for multinational corporations ultimately exacerbate interlocal competition as each local government attempts to undercut one another in terms of corporate incentives (Harvey 1989, Jessop 2005, Peck and Tickell 2002, Theodore and Brenner 2002, Gibson 2004).

As part of this process, intergovernmental relations also dramatically shifted as neoliberalism stresses “devolution, localization, and interjurisdictional policy transfer” (Peck and Tickell 2002). Increasingly, both federal and state governments transferred more responsibilities to the municipal government. Municipalities,

strapped for cash from a combination of declining federal monies, waning tax bases, business friendly tax structures, in turn increasingly transferred more public service responsibilities to private companies and/or private-public entities, for example BIAs. With this devolution of services to the private sector, neoliberal restructuring dramatically shifted territorial development strategies (Brenner and Theodore 2002). While urban governance structures have always been predominately dictated by elite members of society, neoliberalization has disproportionately increased the power of urban elites (Theodore and Brenner 2002). This increased capacity of elites to influence urban governance has had a profound effect on the urban form as elites pursue “the mobilization of entrepreneurial discourses” that aggressively advanced the revalorization of the downtown in accord with “elite/corporate consumption” (Theodore and Brenner 2002, 371-372, Harvey 1987 1989). As a result, contemporary development strategies put forth by urban governance coalitions validate and champion gentrification, speculative redevelopment, increased surveillance, the privatization of public space, and the increased criminalization of marginalized populations, like the poor and homeless. Illustrating the ramifications of these renewed energies, Davis (1991) and Mitchell (2003) detail ways in which increased neoliberalization of space has perpetuated and exacerbated inequalities in the urban landscape.

Emphasizing deregulation and government retrenchment, as corollaries of neoliberal programs, labor conditions and the welfare state have been destabilized (Brenner and Theodore 2002). Wage relations have shifted as firms increasingly replace full-time staff members with part-time, temporary, and/or contract

workers. These part-time, temporary, and contract workers face increased job insecurity and are generally not offered the same degree of occupational benefits as their former full-time counterparts (Piven 2001, Gibson 2004). Complementing this, in an effort to attract footloose firms, federal, state, and local governments enacted policies decreasing worker protections and worker regulations as well as weakened the power of organized labor and bargaining agreements (Brenner and Theodore 2002). As a result of these conditions, job security and bargaining abilities are limited and volatile.

In addition to increased job instability, welfare reform under neoliberal restructuring has reduced federal and state funding of social services and housing programs, increasingly devolved welfare responsibilities from public to private entities, and authorized new requirements rendering public social services increasingly difficult to access (Piven 2001, Brenner and Theodore 2002). Commonly noted as the transition from Keynesian welfare to “workfare,” neoliberal welfare reform involved additional requirements and restrictions for social services, such as narrower and more stringent eligibility requirements, labor obligations/participation requirements (both with public and/or private entities), time limitations, and expanded penalization of services “for minor rule transgressions, and for undesirable behaviors” (Piven 2001, 140; Peck 2001, Brenner and Theodore 2002, Bonds 2014, forthcoming). Given this continued devolution, the “shadow state,” charities and private-public entities, are increasingly endowed with the dispensing of public social service provision (Dear and Wolch 1993, Mitchell 2011). As Mitchell (2011) describes:

For the “deserving” poor, charity-based aid, now especially faith-based charity aid, and the shadow state more generally, provide beds, addiction and job counseling, and not a little “tough love” (see Staeheli and Mitchell, 2008, p. 66). Such makeshift charity has replaced the aid-as-right that marked the welfare state (even the U.S.’s minimal one). For the “undeserving” homeless, there is an increasingly punitive legal regime marked by anti-homeless laws, enhanced trespassing laws, limits on general assistance cash payments to homeless people, and other measures targeted at homeless peoples’ ability *to be* in a particular locale (950).”

In addition to navigating restrictive and punitive shadow state social service provision systems, low income and homeless individuals are faced with diminishing public housing and affordable housing options. In the past few decades, federal housing policies shifted to reflect neoliberal principals. A prominent example of this is the federal Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE IV) program, which functions around, and extols, neoliberal principals such as private-public partnerships, market forces, and personal responsibility (Hackworth 2007). Crump (2002), in addition to highlighting the overly simplistic spatial solutions that these new housing projects provide, stressed that the demolition of public housing for mixed-income market projects has the potential to result in the “net loss” of low-income housing “reflecting the redevelopment goals of the city” (592). In addition to waning federal housing options and availability, the loss of single-occupancy rooms (often due to gentrification and rezoning), other affordable housing options, and the reduction of public social service funding, in particular shelter programs and overnight facilities, ultimately increases the visibility of the homeless (Herbert 2011, 96, Mitchell 2011).

Connected to the neoliberal sociospatial polarization of the city, Neil Smith (1996) described the “new frontier” and the physical transformation of space in the

inner city for middle class consumers. Smith argued that these middle class “pioneers” engaged in a program of revanchism, most realized in the gentrification of inner city neighborhoods. Revanchism refers to the ‘retaking’ of the city by the middle class in which a narrow set of middle class standards dominate the urban landscape largely to the detriment of marginalized groups, such as the homeless and working class. Smith (2002) outlined the relationship between the global and urban in neoliberal urbanism, advancing two critical points about revanchism: first, that there has been a rescaling of the urban; and second, that gentrification was no longer a sporadic venture but that it now constitutes a pervasive and global neoliberal strategy advanced by a number of urban governance agents. According to Smith, corresponding with the greater social and economic restructuring, the rescaling of the urban acts as an apparatus in which social power is (re)solidified. He argues that current revanchist programs are being released “at a scale never before seen” and are geographically focused on “retak[ing] control” of cities (444-5). Gentrification programs are increasingly supported by the state through the legislation of anti-homeless laws, zoning laws, the increase of private-public entities (like BIAs), and other urban anti-homeless design features (Mitchell 2011, Davis 1993).

As described above, neoliberal restructuring increasingly devolved and privatized welfare programs while also generating more job insecurities and advancing revanchist style gentrification programs in the center city. Together, these neoliberal policies have led to the increased visibility of homeless individuals as access to livable wages, affordable housing options, and public social services

greatly diminished (Mitchell 2003, 2011, Herbert 2011). Thus, while cities continue to develop mechanisms to rid areas earmarked for redevelopment of homeless individuals, neoliberal state policies and gentrifying conditions ultimately facilitate the growth of homeless populations in these very same areas (Herbert 2011, 96). These conditions result in renewed spatial battles over public spaces in the downtown centered on the control and management of homeless individuals (Mitchell 2003). This will be further discussed in the Right to the City literature review and in context to Seattle in Chapter Three and Chapter Five (Mitchell 2003). Significantly, BIAs operate as integral facet in this process and in neoliberal restructuring.

BIAs and Urban Restructuring

To understand BIAs and growing prevalence as contemporary urban revitalization mechanisms, it is important to examine the socioeconomic and political factors that incubated their formation. As noted above, under processes of neoliberalization, urban governments have transitioned into more entrepreneurial – and less managerial - roles in which cities take the back seat in favor of privatized services (Harvey 1989, Peck and Tickell 2002). BIAs can be seen as one articulation of this type of neoliberal, entrepreneurial restructuring. Developing in the late 1960s and then quickly proliferating in subsequent decades, the emergence of BIAs closely tracks the rise of urban neoliberalism. BIAs encapsulate neoliberal ideology in that they are private-public ventures that keep municipal tax structures low, promote personal responsibility, remove government oversight of public service

provision, and represent yet another level of public service devolution, from the urban to the neighborhood scale (Ward 2007; Lewis 2010). Illuminating such logics, BIAs are often touted as efficient, cost-effective, flexible, innovative and entrepreneurial mechanisms for urban revitalization that circumvent the problem of “free riding” (defined below), as all property and business owners are obligated to pay into the BIA budget through mandatory property assessment fees. Perhaps not surprisingly, BIAs are increasingly popular options for cash-strapped city governments endeavoring to provide services yet facing budget limitations from government retrenchment and the increased devolution of services from other government scales. Additionally, these systems appear lucrative for cities wanting to attract footloose capital through entrepreneurial means, such as having low municipal tax rates, deregulation, and the increased privatization of public services.

BIAs also appear beneficial for cities wanting to attract the so-called “creative class” as they offer sanitation and safety programs in line with “disneyfication” aesthetics, as well as “cultural” programming that is purported to add to a city’s “livability” (Florida 2002, Reichl 1999, Ward 2007). Disneyfication refers to the creation of “packaged” urban spaces consisting of amalgamated shopping, dining, and entertainment districts that have themed and controlled environments aligned with a particular aesthetic in which history and culture is typically commoditized, devoid of actual history, in effort to capture the attention of middle and upper class denizens and tourists (Sorkin 1992). With this in mind, BIA programming often aims to construct and maintain a comprehensive “brand” for its geographic district through the uniform design, planning, regulation, and marketing of the area. For

example, BIA streetscaping services often involve uniform design features, uniform outdoor furniture, banners, flowerboxes, etc. Furthermore, sanitation and security programs offered by BIAs add additional regulations to control the actions and individuals within these spaces (see Chapter Five). In addition, BIA programming also commonly provides “cool” amenities, such as public art, concert series, and other various engagement activities aimed at complimenting the lifestyles of the “creative class” (Florida 2002, Peck 2005). Thus, BIA programming essentially endeavors to create Disney-like spaces in the downtown or as Reichl (1999) submits, are part of the development of “exclusive areas of work, rest, and play for a higher-income, whiter population” in downtowns (177).

To further analyze the connections between BIAs and shifts in urban governance, it is important to develop an understanding of the basic operational structure of BIAs. BIAs are privately managed organizations sanctioned by the state to provide supplemental public services and economic development programs within a defined geographic area of the city. Thus, BIAs serve as prime examples of private-public partnerships, which Harvey (1989) stressed were a hallmark of entrepreneurial governance. The geographic area of a BIA typically is limited to the scale of the neighborhood or one commercial district. However, as evident within the case of Seattle, BIAs can operate at a larger scale and have overlapping boundaries. Within these geographic districts, BIAs provide supplemental public services, such as cleaning and sanitation, marketing, safety and security, economic development, and streetscaping services (Morcol and Zimmerman 2006). This focus on one particular district or commercial area of the city highlights another variant of

neoliberal devolution. Public services once provided at a municipality level are now increasingly, privately provided on a very localized scale. This has the potential to increase the balkanization of the city, creating cities within cities, and the bipolarity of socioeconomic inequalities in the urban landscape (Ward 2007). Additionally, increasingly more and more BIAs offer “social services” within their area. This serves as yet another example of the devolution of public services to the “shadow state” (Mitchell 2011).

In general, BIAs are managed as a non-profit group, or as a private-public or public non-profit partnership (Briffault 1999, Mitchell 1999). Given this public-private composition, many argue that BIAs constitute “quasi-governmental entities” (Morcol and Zimmerman 2006) that work as a “parallel state” (Mallett 1993) or as “private governments” (Lavery 1995). BIAs, therefore, fit Peck and Tickell’s (2002) description of neoliberal entities that exist between government and private entities. Importantly, the power structures of BIAs (discussed more in-depth below) often only allow business and property owners to dictate BIA programming and policy and therefore, serves as another example of how neoliberal programs increasingly render cities less democratic (Brenner 1999). For more on this subject see Lewis (2010), Morcol and Zimmerman (2006), Justice and Goldsmith (2006), and Meek and Hubler (2006).

History of BIAs

The first BIA organization was formed in Toronto, Canada in the 1960s. Toronto, like many industrial cities in the developed world during this time acutely

suffered from decline caused by a combination of socioeconomic and political factors. West Bloor Village had once been a thriving Toronto commercial corridor. However, by the 1960s, faced with new competition from suburban malls and increased residential suburbanization, the popularity of West Bloor Village began to wane. Local business owners, such as Alex Ling and Neil McLellan, lobbied for the creation of a special business district to help curb decline in the commercial district (Symes and Steel 2005, Hoyt 2005). While a business association was operating within West Bloor Village, membership was voluntary. Ling, McLellan and other likeminded Toronto business owners saw this voluntary organization as highly problematic and ineffective as it allowed “free-riders” to take advantage of the organization’s funds and programs (Hoyt and Gopal-Agge 2007, Hoyt 2005) The term “free riders” refers to business and property owners that did not monetarily contribute to the voluntary business organization but given their location reaped benefits from the association’s activities. Blackmar (2006), giving the history of this term, states:

“By the early 1970s, the “free rider” had transmogrified into a vague cross between Dennis Hopper and a welfare queen, a figure who undermined the very definition of self-interested human nature, to say nothing of the actual maximization of social wealth, by sponging off and depleting a public domain paid for by other people’s money (70).

Utilizing BIAs to eliminate ‘free riding’ is consistent with neoliberal principals of privatization, and personal responsibility. Ultimately, Ling and McLellan were successful in lobbying for the passage of municipal legislation that would allow for the creation of BIAs, resulting in the establishment of the Bloor-Jane-Runnymede Improvement Area (Hoyt 2005). Unlike the previous business association, it was

mandatory that all property and business owners within the area contribute monetarily to the BIA budget. The creation of the BIA in Toronto was deemed an “immediate success” as it helped facilitate increased profits for the West Bloor commercial district (Symes and Steel 2007, Hoyt 2005). Currently, there continues to be a BIA established in West Bloor Village and the area has remained a “bustling strip,” albeit with some glaring gentrification issues (Yang 2010).

Given the apparent success of this new revitalization mechanism, it is not surprising that many other states and cities began to emulate its practices. In the United States, Louisiana is often recognized as the first state to pass BIA legislation and shortly thereafter, the first BIA appeared in New Orleans in 1975, known as the Downtown Development District (Briffault 1999). BIA creation increased in subsequent decades, witnessing exponential growth throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. Currently in the United States, 48 states have enacted legislation sanctioning BIA formation and, by 1999, it was estimated that between 800 and 1000 BIAs were created (Hochleutner 2003, Mitchell 1999). Mitchell (1999) found that BIAs were most abundantly established in the states of California, with a total of 73; New York, with a total of 63; and interestingly, Wisconsin, with a total of 54. New Jersey and North Carolina come in a distant fourth and fifth with 35 and 34 BIAs respectively.

BIA Organization

In the United States, BIA legislation is first under the purview of state legislation, and then municipal legislation (Hoyt 2005). Left to the discretion of the

states and then municipalities, there is a large degree of diversity among BIA requirements in the US. In addition to being sanctioned by government bodies, BIAs are also typically backed by the majority of business owners within a geographic area. However, in very rare cases, BIAs have been enacted solely by the powers of the local government (Stymes and Steel 2005). BIAs have been established in a variety of urban and suburban contexts, such as in CBDs, residential areas, industrial areas, and commercial districts (Ratcliffe et al 2004). However, to date, the overwhelming majority of BIAs exist in CBDs and other downtown districts within close proximity to the CBD (Ratcliffe et al 2004, Stokes 2007). However, BIA distribution has been found to be highly uneven; for example, Meltzer (2011) found that areas with high value commercial properties, huge commercial square footage, high incomes, denser populations, and older housing were more likely to form BIAs. In the US, BIAs can be found in most major cities such as New York, San Diego, Baltimore, Milwaukee, Denver, Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington D.C (Briffault 1999).

In terms of geographic extent and budgets, BIAs in the U.S. exhibit a wide variety of differences. Geographically, as specified in their charters, BIAs are established to cover a specific territory within the municipality. The majority of BIAs comprise of a few blocks, generally encompassing a commercial strip. Yet, BIAs can also be geographically expansive extending over many blocks, square miles, and multiple neighborhoods. Financially, smaller BIAs have been documented to have budgets as low as a few hundred dollars, while larger BIAs can have budgets within the multi-million dollar range (Stymes and Steel 2003). Mitchell

(1999) found that the majority of BIAs have budgets ranging from \$8000 to 15 million, with a median budget of \$200,000. This extreme financial gap between small and the large BIAs underscores the fact that BIAs have significantly different degrees though which they can finance their programs and deliver services to their constituencies (Hoyt and Gopal-Agge 2005). Additionally, this also underscores that not all BIAs are big or powerful players within the local urban governance structure. Smaller BIAs with less clout presumably will also have less power within processes of urban governance while larger and more powerful BIAs have the potential to be major players in urban governance (Morcol and Wolf 2006). In general, property assessments provide the major financial bulwark of a BIA budget (Hoyt Gopal-Agge 2007). Typically, a small number of big firms pay the preponderance of the BIA budget through assessments (Briffault 1999). However, these assessments are by no means the only source of revenue for a BIA. Rather, it is rare that BIAs only rely on property assessments. In addition to receiving money from property assessments, BIAs also obtain funding and revenue in the form of voluntary donations, in-kind contributions, bonds, interest, revenue from BIA owned facilities, and government grants (Hoyt and Gopal-Agge 2007, Briffault 1999).

The creation of a BIA is not a given, rather the contrary. Attempting to set up a BIA is generally the “most problematic” part (Symes and Steel 2003, 305). The level of energy, effort, and resources required to create a BIA can be great as business and property owners do not always readily welcome BIAs (Briffault 1999). Not too surprisingly, although considerably smaller than property taxes, generally the most offsetting element about a BIA is its assessment tax. In most states BIAs

legislation establishes some form of sunset provisions for BIAs, typically set at five years (Briffault 1999). However, this legislation is generally always renewed as BIAs rarely dissolve (Hoyt and Gopal-Agge 2007).

By 2007, ten countries had adopted BIA legislation and another eight countries were deliberating on adopting BIA legislation (Hoyt and Gopal-Agge 2007). Beyond Canada and the United States, BIA legislation has been adopted in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Germany, Jamaica and Serbia (Morcol and Wolf 2006). As of 2005, the number of BIAs outside of the US was recorded at 185 for Australia, 347 for Canada, 261 for Japan, 140 for New Zealand, and 225 for various European countries (Hoyt 2005). Much of the international writing on BIAs has focused on transfer policy and BIAs as neoliberal apparatuses (Peel, Lloyd, and Lord 2008, Lloyd, McCarthy, McGreal, and Berry 2003, Ward 2006, Cook 2009, and Didler, Peyroux, and Morange 2013).

BIAs in Urban Scholarship

Given their relatively new existence, the academic study of BIAs is a somewhat new addition to the broader social science field. The somewhat limited literature on BIAs consists primarily of case studies by researchers within the field of public administration that document the function, organization, and the effects of BIAs. Most of these studies on BIAs have been performed in prominent North American cities, such as San Diego (Stokes 2006, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006), Philadelphia (Hoyt 2005), New York (Barr 1996, Goss 2005, Ellen et al 2007, Meltzer 2011, Goss 2013), Los Angeles (Meek and Hubler 2006, Marquardt and

Fuller 2012), Milwaukee (Ward 2007, Toth 2012), Washington D.C. (Schaller and Modan 2006, Wolf 2006, Lewis 2012,) New Haven (Clough and Vanderbeck 2006), and Denver (Jones and Foust 2008). Additionally, international case studies include cities like Cape Town (Miraftab 2007, Michel 2013, Didler et al 2013), and Hamburg (Michel 2013), as well as UK locations (Lloyd et al 2003, Ward 2006, Cook 2008, Justice and Skelcher 2009, Magalhaes 2012). Of this body of literature, one of the following five subject matters frequently serves as the focus of BIA study: 1) their democratic nature and accountability (Briffault 1999, Morcol and Zimmerman 2006, Schaller and Modan 2005, Hoyt 2005, McFarlane 2003; Hochleitner 2003, Justice and Goldsmith 2006, Morcol and Wolf 2006)2) their potential to create service inequalities and further balkanization of the city (McFarlane 2003, Symes and Steel 2003, Miraftab 2007, Schaller and Modan 2006, Mallet 1994, Lewis 2010);3)potential spillover effects (Garodnick 2000, Symes and Steel 2003, and Lloyd et al 2003); 4) regulation of public spaces (Schaller and Modan 2006, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, Miraftab 2007); and 5) BIA discursive practices (Miraftab 2007, Michel 2013).

Studies on the Democratic Nature and Accountability of BIAs

The question of whether BIAs are democratic has been covered by a number of researchers (Briffault 1999, Morcol and Zimmerman 2006, Morcol and Wolf 2006, Schaller and Modan 2005, Hoyt 2005, Justice and Goldsmith 2006, Hochleitner 2003, McFarlane 2003). In the U.S. context, most of this debate has centered on the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. While every state dictates their own

legislation on BIAs, almost all states concentrate most, if not all, power and authority to business and property owners by limiting leadership positions to business and property owners within the BIA. Additionally, BIA-voting procedures are generally open only to business or property owners. In the very few cases in which BIAs do allow residents some voting rights they are usually weighed less than business and property owner's votes. MacDonald and Grunwald (2013) sum this up stating, "in short, the BIA voting structure can deprive local residents of equal representation in quasi-governmental decision making" (627). Beyond residents, others fear that already marginalized groups, such as the homeless, street vendors, and the working poor, are disenfranchised from representation entirely (Briffault 1999, MacFarlane 2003, Schaller and Modan 2006, Miraftab 2007).

Furthermore, within the BIA, there are concerns of equitability on the part of business and property owners as the largest and most prominent businesses and property owners are more likely to have representation on the board and therefore have disproportional representation over smaller businesses and property owners (Briffault 1999). Thus, a BIA can be formed and disbanded without the consent of the majority of property owners if the BIA is approved or not approved by the owners of the majority of assessed property value in the area. The seemingly disproportional representation by large business and property owners, led Morcol and Zimmerman (2006) to conclude that BIAs "look like legal shells for already established business interests" in particular those of private organizations, such as longstanding chambers of commerce and city development corporations. For additional studies on the democratic nature and accountability of BIAs see Barr

(1997), Davis (1997); Garondnick (2000); Kennedy (1996); Batchis (2010) and Murray (2010). For further studies discussing the question of the democratic nature and accountability of BIAs see Meek and Hubler (2006), Morcol and Patrick (2006); Morcol and Zimmerman (2006); Lewis (2010); and Hoyt and Gopel-Agge (2006).

Studies on Service Inequalities and Balkanization of Cities

With the rise and prolific growth of BIAs in recent years, researchers have also begun to examine whether BIAs facilitate the perpetuation of wealth-based inequalities in (public) services, as well as further fragment cities. Some scholars have questioned the aims and intentions of BIAs. Mallet (1994) underscored that BIAs have developed into tools to attract a specific clientele, i.e., urban gentrifiers, corporate leaders, and suburbanites, back into the post-industrial city. In addition to attracting one particular socioeconomic group, other critics claim that BIAs exclude already marginalized groups and cultures from accessing BIA benefits and public space within BIA (McFarlane 2003, Stymes and Steel 2003, Miraftab 2007, Schaller and Modan 2006, Mallet 1994, Lewis 2010). Additionally, as discussed above, BIAs are plainly organized and operated by a limited cross section of society, i.e., business and property owners, leading some researchers to question BIA agendas and whom they ultimately serve. Critics argue that increased privatization of services under BIAs has the potential to increase funding and investment into areas with BIAs and decrease services in other areas of the city.

Likewise, Ward (2007) argued that BIAs further divide the city and strongly encourage inter-urban and intra-urban competition stating, “in contrast to the recent traditions of resource redistribution between places within cities, and between cities within regions, the BIA model builds on existing inequalities, effectively breaking up the urban sphere into competing units” (667). Brooks and Strange (2011) highlight that the effects and benefits of BIAs are inherently highly uneven and as such are not Paerto improvements. Toth (2012) stressed that BIAs significantly vary on their ability to provide services based on the financial revue and geographic size of a BIA (i.e., BIAs with bigger budgets were able to procure more services within their geographic area). Toth (2012) suggested that these wealth based service inequalities can potentially augment present urban inequalities and create further intralocal competition. Conversely, Davis (1997) advocated that BIAs are not balkanizing the city but rather they are commitments to “further egalitarian goals” as BIAs are consistent with prominent tenants of New Urbanism. Meltzer (2011) found that services provided by BIAs in New York had little effect on public spending and service provision across the city as a whole.

Studies on Spill Over Effects

As witnessed above, many tout BIAs as efficient revitalization tools that produce positive transformations for once declining commercial districts and neighborhoods. While there is definitely a degree of evidence to support that claim, among researchers another concern is that BIAs have the potential to create negative spill over affects into adjacent commercial districts and neighborhoods.

Garodnick (2000), Symes and Steel (2003), and Lloyd et al (2003) argued that BIA have the power to shift crime from their district to other neighborhood areas using tool such as private security patrols, augmented police services, and increased surveillance. In empirical exploration of spill over effects, several studies have focused on investigating changes in crime and property value in BIA districts and their adjacent neighborhoods (Hoyt 2002; Hoyt 2005; Brooks 2007; MacDonald et al 2013; Ellen et al 2007). Brooks (2007) and Hoyt (2005) advocated that there is no evidence to support the “boundary effect” and as such, significant spill over of crime does not occur in areas adjacent to BIA districts. MacDonald et al (2013) found that BIAs had no significant effect on violent crime among youths residing near BIAs. Therefore, according to these two empirical studies, BIAs do little to affect crime rates, for better or worse, outside of their territorial jurisdiction. Researching property values within BIA area, Ellen et al (2007) advanced that while property values within BIAs accrued positive impacts on property values, areas outside of the BIAs showed no significant indication of spill over effects.

Several major critiques can be made regarding the current body of literature on spill over effects. First and foremost, the severely limited empirical studies on spillovers effects need greater attention. While this research is a good starting point, it by no means provides conclusive evidence on spillover effects and BIAs, and therefore, more studies are necessary. Researchers should take into account that increasing property rates might have negative effects, as well as, positive effects for already marginalized populations. For instance, although economic revitalization can be highly beneficial, gentrification is a common corollary. Gentrification may

ultimately have the ability to displace long-time residents and business owners, simply dispersing unaddressed urban issues into renewed pockets of spatial segregation of low income and minority populations elsewhere in the city or region.

Studies on BIAs Regulation of Public Space

Some critics advocate that BIAs have the ability to undermine public space. However, this remains one of the most underdeveloped critiques of BIAs and as such, very little research directly engages with this subject matter (Symes and Steel 2003, Schaller and Modan 2006, Miraftab 2007; Walby and Heir 2014; Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). Symes and Steel (2003) underscore that larger firms have the ability to dominate smaller businesses and marginalized groups, urging that “those who face problems of social exclusions to begin with can find themselves increasingly marginalized by a system of ‘privatised’ public service provision, which by its very nature has a specific set of concerns and is aimed at targeting the needs of the affluent business persons and their customers” (309). The targeting of this group insinuates that one group’s conception of public space, in this case the privileged elites, is more important than other groups and individual’s conceptualizations of public space. Elaborating on this effect, Mallet (1994) underscored that BIA security forces impact the homeless and members of the informal economy, such as street vendors by highlight that in Trenton, New Jersey, the court upheld a ban on street vending sponsored by a BIA, prompting Mallet to conclude, “businesses have bought the right to say what should and should not happen on public streets.” (281) Schaller and Modan (2006) examined Neighborhood Business Improvement

Districts (NBIDs) by looking at ways in which notions of citizenship and public space were invoked. The authors found that the power to articulate acceptable and unacceptable behaviors within the area of the NBID was predicated on a narrow set of actors, primarily property and business owners. This largely had the effect of disenfranchising various actors that can also inhabit that space, in particular those already marginalized by society, such as low-income minority populations and the homeless. Mitchell and Staeheli (2006) also performed a study on BIA and public space regulation that will be discussed in detail in the Right the City subsection of this chapter.

Studies on BIAs and Discourse

Several studies have started to focus on BIAs and discourse. Cook (2009) overviewed the introduction of BIAs to England and Wales noting that BIAs were first touted as “successful” tool for urban regeneration, often citing US east coast locations as successful exemplars, and secondly, reshaped to fit the national and local contexts found in these countries. Michel (2013) highlighted that the framing of BIAs utilized a place-sensitive approach involving a highly localized and contingent articulation of an urban crisis. Furthermore, Michel found that Community Improvement Districts (CIDs, another terminology of a BIA) were framed as representatives of the community and working in the interest of the common good and that CID discourse commonly framed their areas as “world class” cities. Miraftab (2007) argued that discursive and spatial practices of South African BIAs in Cape Town, like other neoliberal practices, ultimately promote uneven

development. In particular, Miraftab argues that in Cape Town the discourse utilized was aimed specifically at the (re)construction of the urban environment to “serve ideal of a world class city integrated into the global economy, at the cost of the city’s social and spatial integration” (603). Part and parcel of this discourse is constructing the notion that no alternatives to urban revitalization exist apart from private mechanism. For additional studies on BIA and discourse see Ranasighe (2013).

Examining the Politics of Public Space and the Right to the City

“Everywhere one looked in American culture during the 1980s and ‘90s there were symptoms of a heightened sensitivity to the menace of the postindustrial metropolis and its residents. Everywhere there was alarm about the city’s moral decline and rampant criminality. In the minds of many Americans, economically depressed urban centers like Philadelphia, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Detroit had become vast landscapes of fear, seem as teetering on the verge of an impending apocalypse or already smoldering in ruins.”

Steven Macek (1999; 41)

“The last thing anyone wants is for beautiful Seattle to permanently transformed into a dingy Detroit with a downtown that's an unsafe eyesore.” (Jamieson 2007)

As numerous urban scholars have argued, the regulation of public spaces is a central component of neoliberal programs (Harvey 2006, Gibson 2004, Low and Smith 2006, Smith 1996, Mitchell 2002, Lees 2003, Reichl 1999). As the above quote illustrates, there remains a heightened sense of fear of crime in urban areas, particularly in post-industrial areas, even as, crime rates throughout the US have continued to decline over the previous three decades (Hubbard 2003; Schweitzer, 1999; Pain 1997; Maeck 1999). This intensification of fear within urban public (and

private) spaces is palpable in the physical and representative layout of the modern landscape. These fears are crystalized in a range of systems, including: the increasing utilization of urban high tech security systems (Davis 1992); increased urban policing and rising incarceration rates; the enactment of hyper-punitive civility or “quality-of-life” laws (Mitchell 2003, Herbert and Beckett 2009); the increased physical gating of spaces (i.e., gated communities and parks; and the increased representational “gating” of spaces) (Low 2003); safeguarded by the socioeconomic hyper-bipolarity of the urban landscape; and increased exclusionary practices predicated on these divisions (Davis 1992, Mitchell 2003, Herbert and Beckett 2009, Miraftab 2007). The United States is not the only place in which these trends are palpable; this is clearly now an international phenomenon that intersects a multiplicity of scales (Low and Smith 2006).

Discussing the contradictory trends of rising insecurity with decreased rates of crime, Low and Smith (2006) underscore that “the underlying reasons for heightened angst in these decades probably had less to do with real threats to bodily or property security than with economic and deep-seated ontological securities concerning identity” (2). In particular, the authors correlate these widespread and indefatigable middle-class anxieties with massive postwar economic restructuring in 1970s and the continuous recessions of the 1980s, 1990s, and more recently in 2008, coupled with the rising conservatism. Under the capitalist system, the overwhelming response to these crises of identity has been the total acceptance and roll out of neoliberal and revanchist programs (Peck and Tickell 2002, Smith 1996).

In recent years there has been extensive exploration and writing focused on

the politics of public space, in particular looking at the nexus between exclusionary practices by both public and private means (Smith 1996, Lees 2003, Davis 1992, Sorkin 1992, Mitchell 2003). Much of this body of work predicated on the theoretical foundation laid by French Marxist Henri Lefebvre, in his seminal work, *The Production of Space* (1991). Lefebvre, writing during the midst of a tumultuous urban period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, posited several significant theories regarding the construction of space. Succinctly, Lefebvre advanced that space is a socially constructed product. Given this, the social (re)production of urban space is essentially the reproduction of society and by extension, a method of social control. Lefebvre outlined that spaces (spaces of representation) are constructed through a spatial triad consisting of representations of space, spatial practices, and representational space, also known as conceived space, perceived space, and lived space, respectively. Representations of space, or conceived space, are the spatial articulations of technocrats, such as architects, planners, scientists, engineers, etc. Spatial practice, or perceived space, refers to the spatial practices and activities of a society within a particular space, i.e., the daily routines of urban inhabitants and their relation to the built environment. Representational spaces, or lived space, referred to the inhabitants and users experience of "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols." (39). Lefebvre asserted that the city was an "oeuvre" and that all citizens should have the right to participate in the creation, formation, and reformation of the oeuvre. This right, according to Lefebvre, consists of 1) participation, the right to actively take part in decisions regarding the construction of space, and 2) appropriation, the right to access, occupy, use and

construct space according to one's needs. Yet, Lefebvre asserted that certain populations, in particular the working class, were largely estranged from participation and appropriation within the contemporary capitalist city allowing for the deep and continued entrenchment of the hegemonic representations of space.

On this point, Mitchell (2003) discussing the neoliberal disfranchisement of certain populations from the oeuvre stated that under the current capitalist system participation was substituted for "expropriation by the dominant class" and as a result the city has been "made for us rather than by us" (18). Expressing similar sentiments, Harvey (2003) stipulated that the right to the city entails the ability to change the city "after our heart's desire" but that this ability has been increasingly hindered by the "wave of privatization that has been the mantra of a destructive neoliberalism" (941). As such, Harvey pressed that the system of capitalism must be challenged to prevent the increased seizure of rights from those outside of the dominant class. Facilitating this expropriation, Lefebvre noted that the state often acts as an accomplice with the dominant class under a new "state mode of regulation" by playing a chief role in the construction of legal regulations that favor the creation of capitalist spaces. For additional research on the nexus between laws and the right to participation and appropriation in public spaces see Mitchell (2003), Varsanyi (2008), Staeheli and Thompson (1997).

One direction that the politics of public space and by extension the right to the city scholarship has undertaken in recent decades involves the question of "what makes public space public" and importantly, who exactly has rights to utilize and reproduce these spaces (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). The preponderance of work

within this subject has explored issues centered on the privatization of public spaces, the (re)regulation of public spaces, including overt and covert controls, and exclusion practices based on a range of factors, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and age, (Smith 1996, Lees 2003, Mitchell 2003, Zukin 1995, Kearns and Philo 1993, Reichl 1999). In particular, many academics, from a wide array of fields, have investigated the post-industrial clampdown and privatization of public spaces (Zukin 1995, Sorkin 1992, Boyer 1992, Davis 1992, Mitchell 2003, Low 2003, Harvey 1989, Katz 2006, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006).

Zukin, (1995) looking at the relationship between postmodern redevelopment and the role of culture, suggested that inner cities were experiencing “domestication by cappuccino” or in other word, the increased controlled of public spaces through maintenance, surveillance, and most importantly, the expansion of consumptive possibilities in public spaces. This foundational work led to the development of what is now known as the “disneyfication” literature (Reichl 1999). While many “disney spaces” require major financial backing from large corporations, such as the Disney Corporation in Times Square, these spaces can also denote simply a themed and controlled environment in which history and culture of an area is commoditized in effort to capture the attention of middle and upper class denizens and tourists. Importantly, these listed features above are exemplified in the programming and goals of many BIAs; again, BIAs focus on branding their neighborhoods through marketing, aesthetic, and “cultural” programs to attract middle class consumers and the “creative class.”

While these critical literatures commonly bemoaned the end of public spaces,

other researchers have focused on the changing nature of public spaces within the contemporary world. Staeheli and Mitchell (2006) urge that “privatization has been largely understood in metaphorical terms” from this vantage what appears to be largely missing from the literature body is “a look at what is happening to the nature of property itself, thus a more through look at public space under redevelopment is warranted” (148). Adequately defining public, public space, or public sphere can be a highly elusive task as-- again, these concepts are socially constructed. Given this nature, each term has a variety of meanings that continues to change over time, space, and within different cultural contexts. Low and Smith (2006) therefore stress that public spaces are “not homogenous areas” but rather “highly differentiated from instance to instance” (3-4). Still, even with these differences in scale and context, what is clear is public space is commonly centered around the idea of increased sociability, increased public participation, and increased accessibility, particularly in contrast to private spaces (Low and Smith 2006).

Essential to Mitchell and Staeheli’s (2006) theoretical underpinnings is the concept of a property regime. The authors describe property regimes as the “prevailing systems of laws, practices, and relations among different properties” that determine who may be excluded from particular spaces and under what conditions. Under the capitalist system, property, both private and public, is not an isolated entity but rather it has an interdependent relationship with surrounding spaces. For private property the exchange value of land is predicated not singularity on the private parcel alone but on its relation to neighboring spaces. Given this relation, property owners have a vested interest in the spaces and uses of

properties, both private and public, within close geographical proximity of their properties. One of the principal objectives of property owners is to sustain, or even better, augment the value of properties within its surrounding area. Mitchell and Staeheli identified what they termed the “regime of publicity” to indicated the hegemonic social system of power that dominates the (re)formation of spaces, both private and public. While not impermeable or completely static, they are regimes because they are deeply embedded, institutionalized, in which the “roles (of owners, users, police, and transgressors) are clear.” Regimes of publicity are formulated through a combination of localized pursuits, social norms and processes of legitimation. (142)

Given this dialectic of private and public property, the redevelopment of semi-public and public spaces has become a *sine qua non* for the development of private spaces (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). Semi-public developments, such as state subsidized convention centers and sports arenas, are touted as economic redeemers for cities, even though they often fail to meet these objectives (Eisenger 2000). Likewise, more traditionally conceived public spaces, such as sidewalks, parks, and streets, are also paramount to the contemporary redevelopment scheme as the serve as “cornerstones” to new projects (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). Increasingly, in effort to jumpstart private developments through the (re)development of these public cornerstones, private entities increasingly gain more control within the realm of maintenance and policing of public space, often through private-public partnerships, again, such as BIAs. As discussed earlier, these spaces are identified as pseudo-private spaces; spaces that are formally owned by

the state, and by extension “the people” but are regulated by private interests.

These pseudo-private spaces change “the means by which public space is regulated and hence the relationships that constitute it as property are transformed” (151).

Thus, BIAs are highly implicated in this processes.

I draw from these bodies of literature, to examine the changing property regime in Seattle and to examine of the spatial and representational practices of the downtown BIA. BIAs serve as an significant facet of the larger neoliberal program as they place additional private control and regulations on public spaces often through increased maintenance (a la disneyfication style programs), militarized surveillance schemes (Davis 1992), programming aimed at engendering middle class consumption, and through the enforcement of the anti-homeless laws (See Chapter Five). However, before engaging in that topic, it is also necessary to understand the local context for BIA creation and BIA programming in Seattle. Seattle’s significant economic insecurities over the past few decades coupled with Seattle elites unrelenting obsession to reach “world class city” status has significantly shaped BIAs’ programming in the city. The following chapter outlines the economic, social, and political climate of Seattle. In addition to ushering in BIA creation, importantly, the economic, social, and political climate of Seattle ultimately engendered the city’s urban governance players protracted “obsession” with the homeless (Kearney 2000).

Chapter Three: From Crisis to Spectacle: Seattle, WA

Tucked bucolically between the Cascades and the Olympics alongside the Puget Sound, Seattle, a city associated with several large computer, biotech, and e-commerce companies, is commonly considered a “winner” of the postindustrial economy. Giving credence to this, Seattle has the highest per capita income and wealth in the Pacific Northwest, an area that includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, due largely to its educated labor force and specialized industry base, as well as the city’s favorable balance of trade with inner regions (Brown and Morrill 2011, 5). Not considered a global city, such as New York and Los Angeles, Seattle is commonly considered to fall squarely within the “third tier in national hierarchy” (Brown and Morrill 2011, 5). This positioning, while making it the powerhouse and main node of business within the Pacific Northwest, is the subject of constant vigilant watch and anxiety for the urban elite within Seattle. Those most active in Seattle’s urban governance are constantly looking to extend the city’s position in relation to other national and global cities (Gibson 2004). In an effort to do this, city leaders have pursued a number of economic tactics over the past few decades. The following section offers a brief history of the Seattle area that details the economic circumstances that have fashioned the current conditions within the city. As articulations of public space are linked to “wider social restructuring, middle class insecurities,” an understanding of the city’s economic crisis and the conditions that precipitated the creation of BIAs is fundamental to understanding the ways in which public spaces are currently being advanced by the latest property regime (Low and Smith 2006, 8).

“Downtown at the crossroads” from Crises to Spectacle

While Seattle has fared better than most cities in the past fifty years, it has experienced substantial economic restructuring and multiple economic panics. As in other U.S. urban contexts, Seattle experienced a period of economic decline and restructuring during the latter half of the twentieth century. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Seattle suffered two fairly serious economic blows that bookended this period: the Boeing Bubble Collapse in the early 1970s and then later, the office collapse in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Gibson 2004). These crises generated a significant shift in urban development policy, which had largely focused on industrial and office space construction through the 1990s, in favor of service sector pursuits and redevelopment stratagems centered on the “mobilization of the spectacle” (Harvey 1987).

The Boeing Company is a critical part of Seattle’s historic and contemporary economic geography. Founded in Seattle in 1916, the Boeing Company served as the major manufacturing lynchpin of the Seattle economy in the first half of the twentieth century. During World War II, Boeing greatly expanded with the growth and development of the aerospace and defense-manufacturing industries (Beyers 2011). Boeing’s growth continued well after World War II. In fact, by the early stages of the Cold War, the Boeing Company was the largest government defense contractor. At its height in 1969, Boeing had over 100,000 employees in the greater Seattle area (Gibson 2004). Yet, like most other manufacturing industries, Boeing proved to be vulnerable to the rising economic crisis and the ensuing industrial decline.

In the early 1970s, the economic crisis of post-war Fordism commenced in earnest, facilitated by stagflation, increased globalization of world markets, and the skyrocketing of crude oil prices in 1973 (Knox et al 2014). To give some perspective to the economic crisis, in the 1960s, economic growth in the U.S. was well over three percent. By contrast, during the 1970s, economic growth stalled and decreased to an average of just over two percent, and later in the decade to barely over one percent (Knox et al 2014). In an effort to remain competitive in a progressively saturated market, industries created more flexible modes of manufacturing, distribution, and organization. Under this program of flexible accumulation, new production processes were developed and implemented across the globe. These processes entailed the increased development of small batch production, the ability to rapidly change product types, demand driven production, and the increase of vertical disintegration (Knox et al 2014). Locally, by 1971, with the reduction of the defense budget, Boeing ultimately reduced its Seattle-based work force by over 60,000 and started moving production sites to other U.S. and international locations (Gibson 2004). While the Boeing collapse was crippling for the greater Seattle area economy, the overall extent and depth of Seattle's industrial decline ultimately paled in comparison to other U.S. cities, in particular those found in the "Rust Belt" region of the United States (Gibson 2004, Wilson and Wouters 2003).

As the manufacturing industry began to decline during the later part of the twentieth century, large growths occurred in the service and white-collar industries, especially in craft industries, office and business services, and high-technology

industries (Peck and Tickell 2002). With the severe decline of industries in the central city, many CBDs increasingly became more reliant on the attraction of new white-collar industries and the retail and entertainment industries. Seattle followed suit in this trend. Given the growth in these industries, crafting the “spectacle” through entrepreneurial governance became the vogue economic panacea for declining center cities (Harvey 1989). These post-industrial redevelopment schemes exhibited similar hallmark features, such as private-public partnerships, speculative strategies, and the insular focus on political economy of place (Harvey 1989).

In his assessment, Harvey (1989) underscored that the “centerpiece” of this new entrepreneurial program was founded on the private-public partnership. One project that private-public partnerships pursued collectively under this new urban entrepreneurial system was the promotion and construction of the city center as an “innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to place and consume in” (9). The central idea behind this principle is that by improving a city’s regional position, it would climb the proverbial “world class city” or “global city” ladder (Sassen 1991). With each tier climbed, a city would ultimately gain distance on other regional and global city competitors through the attraction of new middle class residents, visitors, and shoppers, as well as new international investments in the CBD. Effectively, the “mobilization of the spectacle” entailed the manufacturing of sanitized spaces within the urban environment, especially the downtown, in the hopes of increasing capital accumulation through the attraction of new white collar business, tourism, high-end shopping, and affluent residents (Harvey 1987, 1989).

During the 1980s, many North American cities pursued economic restructuring plans that emphasized attracting white-collar service sector jobs to the downtown, in particular those in the financial and technology sectors. In the two decades after the Boeing bubble burst (the company would continue to have periods of growth and downturns), those active in Seattle's governance pursued an economic program to cultivate the city as a global business and finance center through the rapid (and hubristic) expansion of office space in the CBD. This pursuit would be possible in Seattle through a *mélange* of factors that included: 1) a rash of international investment monies, much of which came from Japanese investors; 2) the seemingly endless demand for office space in the CBD during the 1980s; and 3) a "dose of competitive ego" amid developers operating in Seattle (Gibson 2004, 67). These developers often speculatively hedged their own success on the unfounded and "misplaced faith in a growing market" and the "predicted failure" of their fellow colleagues (McDermott 1996).

Throughout the 1980s, members of Seattle's urban governance, which could be described as the area's growth coalition, focused almost exclusively on the expansion of the CBD with the mass creation of new office spaces in effort to achieve the city's long held "world class" aspirations (Gibson 2004, 66). In Seattle, various growth coalition actors pursued the construction of offices spaces in the downtown in attempts to harness the growth of the service sector and financial industries. In the 1980s, the office boom in downtown Seattle witnessed the unprecedented creation of around 15 million square feet of office space. To illustrate the rapid growth of this sector, in the preceding 120-year period a total of 13 million square

feet of office space was constructed in the downtown (Gibson 2004, 66; McDermott 1996). The crown jewel of all these projects was the behemoth Columbia Seafirst Center (then Bank of America Tower and now the Columbia Center), which celebrated its grand opening in 1985. One *Seattle Times* article described the tower's overall effect on the downtown: "before the Columbia Center, Seattle development was stately" then "afterwards, it was frenzied" (McDermott 1996). The tower, which is still Seattle's tallest building, was supposed to be the embodiment of Seattle's emergence to the level of "world class city." Yet, in actuality, the building perfectly represented the fomenting uneasiness of downtown office space realities. Early on, due to fiscal problems, the building was forced to change hands several times. Martin Selig, the original developer of the building, hastily dumped the tower to Seafirst Bank after facing a multi-million dollar foreclosure lawsuit. While occupancy rates were not a concern during the building's early existence, they would soon develop into an emblematic issue for subsequent owners of the Columbia Tower. As such, the glimmering brilliance of the new downtown office buildings did not accurately reflect the true nature of the office market in Seattle. Describing the situation, Gibson (2004) stated:

"By the 1990s, it was clear to all that Seattle's office market had been woefully overbuilt and that the downtown was now flooded with acres of premium space...High vacancy rates, in turn, sparked dog-eat-dog competition for tenants across the downtown office landscape. With many of the newest buildings still half-empty by the early 1990s, developers turned on one another in a desperate free-for-all to attract tenants at virtually any price" (70).

Like the industrial bust before it, this capitalist "solution" to propel Seattle from parochial power to global city status would ultimately prove, in the end, to be

largely problematic. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Seattle witnessed the bust of the “skyline bubble.” This budding crisis in Seattle was further compounded when the national (global) recession hit the West Coast (Gibson 2004). Thus, by the early 1990s, in Seattle, as well as in many other cities, the channel to “world class city” status through the construction of office space in the CBD sputtering out and stalled completely for a protracted period of time.

In addition to economic restructuring, like other cities during this time, Seattle also witnessed increased suburbanization. The massive extension of the freeway system, federal housing aid, and the decentralization of jobs and industry into the suburban areas facilitated the mass exodus of affluent and middle class white residents from the center city to the surrounding suburbs. Due to this ‘white flight,’ central cities experienced a significant loss in their tax revenue base and as a result, local governments faced severe cutbacks. During the 1970s and 1980s, Seattle witnessed consecutive losses of total population at rates of -4.7 percent and -6.97% respectively (see Table 1, US Census Bureau, Population of Largest 75 cities: 1900 to 2000). Comparatively, during the same decades, the suburban cities of Bellevue and Redmond experienced population growth rates of 377 percent and 21 percent, and 673.6 percent and 111.4 percent, respectively. In addition to attracting residents, these suburban areas also increasingly attracted businesses from the center city. Illustrating the “glut of office spaces” in the downtown and the continued relative growth of surrounding suburban areas in Seattle, by the early 1990s occupancy rates in downtown hovered around 15 percent; in contrast, suburban office space occupancy rates were recorded at five percent (Flores 1992).

The continued growth of suburban areas in residential and business sectors was most famously portrayed in an anonymously funded billboard in the 1970s that read: “will the last person to leave Seattle please turn the lights out” (Gibson 2004).

Table 1: *Seattle Total Population 1970 to 2010:*

Year	Total Population	Growth Rate
1950	467,591	
1960	557,087	19%
1970	530,831	-4.7%
1980	493,846	-6.97%
1990	516,259	4.5%
2000	563,375	9.1%
2010	608,660	8.5%

Data sources: US Census Bureau, Population of 100 largest cities: 1790 to 2000.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html>

2010 data source: US Census Bureau, Retrieved from:

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/53/5363000.html>

Authors calculations

Furthermore, in addition to residential and office competition, retail competition also intensified with the growth of outlying suburban shopping districts, such as Northgate Mall to the north, Bellevue Square Mall across the water to the east, and Southcenter Mall to the south. Looking comparatively at Seattle and surrounding suburban retail districts, one *Seattle Times* article summarized the situation, stating “Seattle's share of the retail pie has diminished steadily as developers have raced to build shopping centers closer to suburbanites” (Keith Ervin, 1999). These controlled mall spaces would be the envy of and, ultimately,

serve as the muse for urban governance players in future redevelopment projects and importantly, for BIA programming in Seattle.

Showing only brief flashes of renewed economic activity in the 1980s, in the 1990s, the Seattle business community went into “full panic mode” (Gibson 2004, 59). Most ostentatiously exhibiting the affects of this continued economic recession was the closing of long-standing local retail fixtures of Frederick and Nelson’s and the I. Magnin department stores in the downtown retail core. In an effort to combat these closures, government officials and elites in Seattle adopted an array of analogous entrepreneurial and neoliberal programs focused around “mobilizing the spectacle” (Harvey 1987). Cities, spurred on by growth coalitions, followed similar large scale, often private-public or semi-public development projects aimed at securing the spectacle, such as convention centers, waterfront plazas, retail cores, sports stadiums, concert halls, developing “cultural activities” and festival spaces, etc. (Harvey 1989). Noting the issues that faced downtown Seattle in the 1990s, one *Seattle Times* article wrote:

“Downtown no longer processes the singular clout it once did, it still dominates the local economy in terms of tax revenues, retail space and jobs. Yet, Seattle’s downtown is showing signs of stress, and some indicators of its direction are troubling. Buildings that once showcased the city’s most elegant stores sit empty, amid spreading emptiness. Streets are busy, but business is slack. Vacant store fronts and half-empty office buildings looms, and shoppers are being driven away by inconvenient, relatively expensive parking, traffic congestion and the fear of being accosted by strangers or victimized by crime... Some of downtown's problems reflect changes in the city it anchors. Seattle's tax base is shrinking as businesses settle in the suburbs. People still are choosing to live in the area, but increasingly, they're living outside the city. Over the last 10 years, the city's share of county population has declined steadily, from 37 percent to 33 percent. More people - a total of 17,762 - have retail jobs downtown, but the number grew only 6.2 percent between 1988 and 1992, compared with 12

percent in the four-county (King-Pierce-Snohomish-Kitsap) region as a whole. Perhaps downtown's most intransigent problems are rooted in social issues: crime and grime and population loss the suburbs; homelessness and panhandling, and the offensive behavior that drives away that critical element on which all retail hinges, the shopper..." (Nogaki, 1994).

This segment concisely illuminates not only the office, residential, and retail decline of Seattle in relation to surrounding suburban areas, but also highlights the refocused effort on reviving the downtown's retail sector, as well as the rekindled anxiety about the presence of homeless individuals in the downtown area.

Looking at Seattle mega projects, Gibson (2004) illuminated the method in which Seattle boosters, developers, and other growth coalition players transformed downtown Seattle into a "24 hour" hotspot for retail, cultural, and consumption pursuits. In order to do this, Gibson stressed that local leaders in Seattle embraced a very narrow and one-dimensional definition of what constitutes a "healthy" or "vital" city (271). Ultimately, severing collateral to these new mega-redevelopment projects and the mobilization of the spectacle were the homeless and low-income populations in the city center. Increased punitive measurements leveled against the homeless coupled with the spatial relocation of social service centers to outside of the downtown core has led to the "social apartheid" of populations in Seattle, with homeless and low-income individuals being pushed to the urban fringes while middle-class consumers and business elites are embraced as godsend in the center city (Gibson 2004).

Starting in the 1990s to the present, Seattle's growth coalition, following the entrepreneurial structure of urban governance, focused on the economic expansion of the city through publically funded large-scale cultural-retail development projects

in an attempt to capture this vaunted class and attain world-class status. In this pursuit, Gibson (2004) calculated that over \$1.4 billion in total downtown investment has occurred over the past twenty years, much of which can be attributed to cultural-retail mega-projects found predominately in the Westlake area, the Pike-Pine Corridor, and near Pioneer Square. Table 2, using data from Gibson (2004), lists the cultural-retail mega-projects built in downtown Seattle during this time. Importantly, many of these projects were funded in part by public funding totaling of over \$700 million (Gibson 2004). For example, the Pacific Place Retail-Expansion and Park Garage project alone cost the city \$110 million dollars in total public investment (Gibson 2004, 113). The highest concentration of these projects occurred in the greater Westlake and Pike-Pine Corridor; the second highest concentration of these occurred near the Pioneer Square neighborhood (Gibson 2004, See Table 2).

In addition, in pursuit of conditions of “livability,” city growth coalition members also pursued the development of large-scale public infrastructure projects and residential developments in the downtown during the past few decades. Some of the largest public projects over the past two decades were the construction of two stadiums (see Table 2), waterfront planning, the development of the Link-Light Rail system, the Aurora Tunnel boring project, and the South Lake Union streetcar. Furthermore, with the exception of the years directly following the Housing Bubble Collapse in 2008, downtown Seattle has incurred substantial residential unit growth from 1995 to 2014 (Eskenazi 2008, City of Seattle 2014 “Growth Report...Permit,” Johnson and Wingfield 2013). Since the Bubble Collapse in 2008, residential

markets have rebounded. Illustrating this, according to the DSA, in 2013 over two thirds of new development in the downtown were residential (66 projects in total) and in fact, in that year the city “issued more new residential building permits than in any year since at least 1984, when the current system of record-keeping began” (Johnson and Wingfield 2013). The DSA projects historic growth in the downtown residential market in the next three years, creating over 12,000 new housing units (DSA Development Guide 2014).

Table 2

Cultural-Retail Mega-Projects built in Seattle, 1990-2002

Project	Location	Cost	Completion Date
Seattle Art Museum	Pike-Pine Corridor	\$61 million	1991
Niketown	Westlake	\$25 million	1996
Eagles Stadium	Westlake, Pike-Pine Corridor	\$31 million	1996
Benaroya Music Center	near Westlake, Pike-Pine Corridor	\$118 million	1998
Pacific Place Retail-Cinema Complex and Parking Garage	Westlake	\$248 million	1998
Nordstrom Department Flagship Store	Westlake	\$100 million	1998
Safeco Field Stadium	Pioneer Square	\$517 million	1999
Convention Center Expansion and Museum of History and Industry co-development	Pike-Pine Corridor	\$170 million	2001
Seahawk Stadium	Pioneer Square	\$430 million	2002

Data Source: Gibson (2004)

Gibson (2004) highlights that the creation of these mega cultural-retail projects, infrastructure projects, and residential developments in the downtown

constitute only a segment of the downtown revitalization puzzle for growth coalition players. Realizing that the latest downtown economic programs necessitated more than the “build it and they will come” mentality, as corollaries to these large scale development projects, growth machine members rolled out numerous ideological and physical programs aimed at “reassuring” upper and middle class consumers that the downtown was safe, livable, and vibrant (155). Thus, growth machine members during this time pursued what Gibson terms “projects of reassurance,” i.e., the various programs aimed at “cleansing” areas of the downtown that are “slated for upscale consumption and leisure” of “anything that might evoke in the middle-class imagination images of danger, disorder, and urban decay” (6-7). BIAs serve as articulations of such projects as one of their main functions is to provide additional cleanliness and safety in the downtown. This idea will be further unpacked and discussed in length in Chapter Five. In Seattle, increased anti-homeless legislation serves as another articulation of “projects of reassurance” propagated during this time by the Seattle growth machine.

Seattle’s Anti-Homeless History

While homelessness has always been a contentious issue in Seattle, it had “been largely dormant” since the early 1980s (Gibson 2004, 76). Starting in the late 1980s and into the present, homeless populations were increasingly framed as impediments to the city’s economic recovery and continued development. The revived interest surrounding the homeless in Seattle can be correlated to the way in which contemporary redevelopment plans “rely on a dialectic of public and private

property” (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, 150). As seen with the development of large-scale projects as listed above, semi-public redevelopment programs were touted as remedies for urban economic problems. In this regard, public spaces are seen as essential to rousing additional private redevelopment as part and parcel of the larger “projects of reassurance.” Accordingly, one of the hallmark undertakings in Seattle has been the creation of municipal legislation designed to manage/remove the presence of the homeless from downtown.

Throughout the 1990s, the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA), one of Seattle’s most prominent and longstanding business associations, and other downtown elites continuously pressured the municipal government of Seattle to do something about the “homeless issue.” The city, direly courting these groups, proved more than happy to oblige their requests. Starting in 1993, the city government crafted and passed a series of “civility” laws aimed at reducing so-called “quality-of-life” concerns. Mark Sidran, the Attorney General under mayor Norm Rice, was one of the leading proponents for the expansion of Seattle civility laws during this time. In a 1993 editorial in the *Seattle Times*, Sidran outlined the necessity of expanding the civility laws in Seattle stating that:

“A critical factor in maintaining safe streets is keeping them vibrant and active in order to attract people and create a sense of security and confidence. When people are deterred from using the sidewalk and storefronts close, a downward spiral of blight may begin. As public confidence diminishes, crime increases, beginning a vicious cycle that, as many formerly great American cities have demonstrated, can be very difficult to reverse. We must do what we can to prevent this downward spiral from setting in”

This explanation by Sidran heavily utilizes Broken Window rhetoric and logic.

Broken Windows, originally espoused by Wilson and Kelling (1983), stressed that

the failure to fix physical imperfections and minor incivility issues in the urban landscape signified a lack of social control and thus, serves as an invitation for further criminal activities, delinquency issues, and unwanted human behaviors (759). In essence the theory stipulates that the presence of disorder will raise citizen fear. In turn, citizens will withdraw, both socially and physically, from urban spaces, which will then cause increased predatory behavior, increased crime, and as a result, the further retreat of citizens (Wilson and Kelling 1983). Fitting in perfectly with other “projects of reassurance,” the theory advocates that first, the built environment must be pristine and that secondly, “strong policing is necessary” to deter and remove unwanted behaviors (759). According to this theory, the presence of homeless individuals and panhandlers in public spaces signifies a “broken window” that will if not speedily managed (or removed) will precipitate the retreat of citizens, visitors, shoppers, etc. In the 1990s, many cities throughout the U.S., as well as globally, eagerly jumped on the Broken Windows bandwagon, including high profile cities, such as New York City under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his program of “zero tolerance” (Reichl 1999). Seattle, likewise, would openly embrace the Broken Windows theory. And, as evident in the interviews and newspaper articles, still largely adheres to the major conventions of the theory, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Though faced with mounting protests from homeless advocates, the civility ordinances were ultimately rather effortlessly adopted by the City Council to the elation of Sidran, the DSA, and other downtown elites. Several of the more significant civility laws passed during this time included the following. First, the

“Public Urination” law was passed, which extended more punitive punishments for this offense by allowing police officers to charge offenders with misdemeanors rather than simple citations. Second, the City Council passed the lie-sit ordinance, the first of its kind in the country, which banned individuals from sitting or lying on sidewalks in the downtown or other commercial districts from 7am to 9pm (Mitchell 2003). This law would eventually be challenged in court and upheld as constitutional in *Roulette v City of Seattle*. Third, the Parks Exclusion law which allowed police to ban individuals from parks for up to a year if they are found to engaging in activities such as drinking, camping, or other “misbehaviors.” Fourth, the Council passed a new criminal trespass law in which the police, with the prior permission of the property owner, can enforce trespass rules without the physical presence of the property owner at the time of the offense. Fifth, they passed the geographic off-limit orders, such as Stay Out of Drug Areas (SODA) or Stay Out of Prostitution Areas (SOPA), in which individuals were geographically prohibited from certain areas of the city (Herbert and Beckett 2009). Sixth, the council passed an ordinance aimed at bolstering an already present aggressive panhandling law, known as the “Pedestrian Inference” law. This ordinance allowed police to cite or arrest individuals that were obstructing a street or are engaging in “intimidating” panhandling behaviors. The wording of this law, in particular the use of “intimidating behavior,” would prove to be a rather nebulous concept and one that would be revisited in future legislative rounds. Importantly, Mitchell (2003) stressed that these so-called quality-of-life laws “exclude as ‘undesirable’ the homeless and the political activist,” effectively allowing one form of privatization to

delegitimize the use of other private groups' ability to access public spaces (142).

With these laws on the books, officers now had new arsenal to manage and regulate homeless individuals in Seattle. However, much to the chagrin of the DSA and other downtown elites, many of these laws, in particular the lie-sit ordinance, were never strongly enforced by the Seattle Police Department (SPD) (Knight 2010). Not surprisingly, during the same period that Seattle's growth machine unequivocally pursued the mobilization of the spectacle, the roll out of programs of reassurance, and more extensive civility laws, the city also witnessed an explosion of BIA creation and BIA activity. While SPD forces might not enforce the civility ordinances to the degree that the DSA would like, the DSA, through its downtown BIA, the MID, has in a certain light found a way to supplement the implementation of these laws by both private and public means. Further exploration of this will be expounded upon in Chapter Five. For further studies on Seattle, homelessness, and social exclusion see Mitchell (2003), Gibson (2004), Beckett and Herbert (2008), Herbert (2008), Sparks (2010, 2012).

Chapter Four: Comparative Overview of Seattle BIAs

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comparative analysis of Seattle BIAs. This analysis describes the formation, organizational structure, geographic size, budget size, and service programming of each BIA in Seattle. While the literature on BIAs continues to grow, interestingly, very few studies have been performed on BIAs in west coast cities, as the mass preponderance of the BIA literature body within the United States has predominately focused on east coast cities, such as New York, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia (Barr 1996, Goss 2005, Ellen et al 2007, Meltzer 2011, Goss 2013, Schaller and Modan 2006, Wolf 2006, Lewis 2012, Hoyt 2005). The two west coast cities that have been the focus of previous BIA studies were Los Angeles and San Diego (Marquardt and Fuller 2012, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). Seattle BIAs were briefly described by Houston (2003), however this information was essentially on “best practices” for BIA planning. In addition to the scarcity of west coast studies within this literature, few BIA studies have looked at “third tier” cities. The majority of research has looked at U.S. “first tier,” or “global cities,” like New York and Los Angeles, or U.S. “second tier” cities, such as Philadelphia and Washington D.C (Hoyt 2005, Lewis 2010). This chapter will provide more information on BIAs in Seattle in an effort to address this gap in the literature.

Unfortunately, I was unable to meet with representatives from all nine BIAs in Seattle. However, I did hold interviews with representatives from three different BIAs: the MID, Pioneer Square BIA (PSBIA), and the Columbia City BIA (CCBIA). These three BIAs offer a good cross sample of Seattle BIAs as they represent three

different sizes of BIAs: one large, or “corporate,” BIA; one medium, or “main street,” BIA; and finally, one small, or “community,” BIA (Gross 2005). According to Gross (2005), a large or corporate BIA has a geographic scope of over 30 blocks, a total assessment revenue of greater than \$1 million dollars, large amounts of office and retail space, and multi-level high rises. The MID expands 285 blocks, has a budget of \$5.7 million, and contains numerous multi-level high rises and retail locations. A medium or main street BIA has a geographic scope in the vicinity of 10 to 30 blocks, a total assessment revenue of \$300,000 to \$1 million dollars, smaller commercial and shopping spaces, and the dominant group of property owners within the BIA are retail and property owners. While not fitting under Gross’ typology perfectly as a main street BIA, the Pioneer Square BIA expands 90 blocks, has a total budget of \$1.2 million, and contains mid-level office buildings and retail spaces, and therefore warrants a medium or main street designation. A small or community BIAs has a budget less than \$300,000, a median geographic scope of 14 blocks, street-level commercial and shopping spaces, and the dominant group of property owners within the BIA are retail and property owners. The Columbia City BIA serves as a small or community BIA as it has a budget of \$56,000, covers around 10 blocks, and consists of primarily street-level shopping areas.

In addition to examining the attributes of Seattle BIAs, this chapter also briefly assesses the accountability of BIAs in Seattle, which is a prominent theme in BIA scholarship. To explore this focus, I examine the democratic nature of Seattle BIAs and their potential to engender or exacerbate inequalities within the urban landscape. I focus specifically on the regulation of public space in the next chapter.

Several trends became apparent in this research on Seattle BIAs. First, BIA distribution and service provision in Seattle has largely been affected by the presence of one particular organization, the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA). Second, BIA budgets, geographic size, and programming are not static but rather have exhibited a degree of change overtime. Third, BIAs in Seattle, to some degree, exhibit characteristics in line with the common criticisms of other BIAs (see for Lewis 2010, Stymes and Steel 1999, Miraftab 2007, Schaller and Modan 2005, Toth 2012, Ward 2007, Meek and Hubler 2006, Wolf 2006, Morcol and Zimmerman 2006, Garodnick (2000), and Lloyd et al (2003). For example, as with other BIAs, Seattle BIAs to an extent lack accountability and are largely undemocratic in nature, and they have the ability to augment inequalities in the urban landscape.

BIA Enabling Legislation in Washington

Closely following the creation of West-Bloor BIA in Toronto, in 1971, the Washington State legislature approved RCW 35.87A, allowing for the creation of BIAs in municipalities around the state. Although Louisiana is commonly cited as the first state in the United States to have passed legislation allowing for the creation of BIA-like entities in 1974, it appears that Washington State should in fact hold that distinction. Regardless, and importantly, it is evident that Washington state was well ahead of most other states in passing legislation allowing for BIA creation. To illustrate, currently the states with the highest number of total BIAs - New York, California and Wisconsin - did not pass BIA-enabling legislation until 1981, 1989, and 1984, respectively. According to Washington's BIA legislation, RCW

35.87A, a “Parking and Business Improvement Area” could be created in a municipality if the following requirements are satisfied: First, in order to establish a special assessment district in an area, a petition for the creation of a BIA must be signed by prospective ratepayers that constitute over 60% of the proposed assessment total of the tentative BIA district. In addition to this signed petition, a transmittal letter and description of the proposed BIA must disclose information on the BIA boundaries, assessment formula, an overview of the prospective BIA budget, and detail how the BIA will be managed. After the city government receives these documents, the highest municipal government body- generally a city council - votes on the enactment of the BIA. After passing this vote, the mayor must sign the ordinance to create the district.

According to the Office of Economic Development (OED) BIA Handbook, state and municipal BIA legislation was created specifically to allow for “indefinite” BIA structuring possibilities to “allow maximum flexibility to the organizers and ratepayers in each district” (OED Handbook 2012, 20). In Seattle there are three ways in which a BIA can be managed. First, BIAs can be managed as independent organizations governed by a board of BIA ratepayers; current examples of this type of organizational structure include the Chinatown/International District BIA and the Columbia City BIA. Second, BIAs can be managed as part of a broader organization, such as a chamber of commerce or business association; current examples of this type of organizational structure include the Capitol Hill BIA and the University District BIA. Third, BIAs can be managed as umbrella organizations of other corporations; current examples of this type of BIA include the Metropolitan

Improvement Area (MID). The umbrella management style has had a significant impact on the size, number, and outcome of BIAs in Seattle.

BIA Formation

Interestingly, RCW 35.87A was rarely utilized throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s in Washington state. In Seattle, BIAs did not start to emerge in earnest until the mid-1980s, and then rapidly so in the 1990s. The arrival and proliferation of BIAs in Seattle during this time can be connected to several macro- and micro- economic changes as discussed in the previous chapter. In the past five years, notably after the economic downturn in 2008, the number of BIAs in Seattle has once again expanded with the formation of three new BIAs, the Seattle Tourist Improvement Area (2011), the Columbia City BIA (2009), and the SODA BIA (2014) (See Graph 4). In total, Seattle currently has nine operating BIAs. In comparison to other U.S. cities with larger, comparable, and smaller population sizes, Seattle (608,662) has relatively fewer BIAs; for example, San Diego (1,301,631), San Francisco, (805,235) and Milwaukee (594,740) have eighteen, ten, and twenty-nine BIAs, respectively (US Census). In addition, the largest BIAs in terms of geographic scope and total budget in these other cities are much smaller than the largest two BIAs in Seattle. For example, one of the largest BIAs in Seattle by geography and budget, the MID, has a geographic span of 285 blocks and an annual assessment budget of \$5.6 million (OED Handbook 2012). In San Diego, the largest BIA, the Downtown San Diego Partnership's (DSDP) BIA, spans 272 blocks and has an annual assessment budget of \$5 million (Downtown Partnership website). However, it is important to note that PBID is also very unique in that it serves as both a business

association and BIA. Thus, unlike MID, this budget reflects revenue from both BIA assessments and membership dues; of this total budget, assessments account for around \$5 million of the total budget (Downtown Partnership Annual Report 2012). If the MID were organized in this fashion, its budget would be considerably larger as it would reflect the budget of the MID and the budget of the DSA. San Francisco's largest BIA, the Civic Center Community Benefit BID, spans 30 blocks and has an annual assessment budget of \$685,044 (San Francisco OED, 2012). Milwaukee's largest BIA, Milwaukee Downtown BID #21, spans 150 blocks and has an annual assessment budget of \$3 million (Downtown Milwaukee BID#21, 2012).

The disparity in the number of BIAs in Seattle compared to other cities can in part be explained by several localized factors and histories. In particular, in Seattle, the presence of a strong local business organization, a member-based non-profit 501(c)(4) designation, the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA), has significantly influenced the outcome and number of BIAs in the city. The DSA, a strong advocate of the BIA model, pursued the creation and then eventual consolidation of several BIAs in downtown Seattle. For this reason, it is important to provide some background information on the DSA. In 1958, in an attempt to curb rising suburban competition, thirty prominent Seattle business leaders formed the DSA, then known as the Central Association. From its inception, the DSA "immediately engaged in cooperative planning with the city" acting as the primary driving growth proponent for large scale city planning projects such as the World's Fair, the creation of the Space Needle, freeway development and planning, the development of Westlake Plaza and the reopening of Pine Street, and the redevelopment of Pike's Place

Market and Pioneer Square, the convention center, the construction of the Seattle Art Museum, the Seattle Public Library's new downtown building, and the Symphony Hall (See Chapter 3, Gibson 2006, Lee 2001, 248, Hill 2000). As evident from this list, since its inception, the organization has been significantly involved in the city's urban development. As my analysis reveals, the DSA serves as a significant gatekeeper in shaping BIAs and, ultimately, ensuring their success. The organization now includes over 600 representatives from local businesses, academic institutions, and human-service entities. The DSA was one of the original proponents of BIA creation. In the 1980s, the DSA actively pursued the formation of several downtown BIAs, and later, led the charge to consolidate four of the smaller downtown BIAs into one massive BIA, the Metropolitan Improvement District (MID). From materials available, it appears that three of the earlier four BIAs in the downtown area were managed as umbrella organizations by the DSA; these earlier BIAs included the First and Second Avenue BIA (established in 1991), the Central Waterfront BIA (established in 1990), and the Seattle Retail Core BIA (established in 1986) (OED BIA Handbook 2012, Interview MID A).

Discussing the formation of one of the four original downtown BIAs, the First and Second Avenue BIA (FSABIA), a former FSABIA and current MID ratepayer described the DSA's role as "critically important" due to having ready and abundant access to information, funds, expertise, and most importantly, energies to dedicate to BIA formation and on-going BIA administrative tasks. The interviewee stressed that the FSABIA would have "never been successful...without the DSA" (MID Interview A). To illustrate this point, the ratepayer emphasized that the only

downtown BIA in Seattle not managed by these in the early 1990s, the Denny Regrade BIA (DRBIA), largely floundered and was eventually disbanded by the property owners. Having served as a representative on both the FSABIA and the DRBIA, the interviewee noted that the “management” styles of the BIAs were crucial to the success of the FSABIA and the failure of the DRBIA (MID Interview A). The DRBIA, operating most likely as a BIA independent organization without DSA oversight, folded in the early 2000s. According to local articles, the DRBIA collapsed under the pressure of property owners within the district who found the entity to be largely ineffective in providing the area with adequate clean and safety services (Erb 1999). Those making up the opposition to the DRBIA, the No BIA! Coalition consisted of primarily large property owners. While representing a minority of the total BIA ratepayers (66 out of 152 rate payers), these large property owners constituted a supermajority of the assessed property value at 71 percent (Erb 2000) and as such, were able to easily disband the BIA. In the wake of DRBIA disbandment, the DSA attempted to fold the Denny area into the MID. However, No BIA! successfully managed to stave off the DSA and annexation into the MID by rallying support from business and property owners in the area by stressing the undemocratic nature of being in a large umbrella-managed BIA and by gaining the support of prominent Seattle developer and BIA critic Martin Selig, former owner of the Columbia Tower (Bush 2006).

The Pioneer Square BIA was created in 1983, the first BIA to be created in Seattle. Following its establishment, throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, Seattle witnessed an explosion of new BIA activity. During the early 1990s,

three DSA-managed BIAs were established within the downtown: the Seattle Retail Core BIA, the FSABIA, the Central Waterfront BIA, and the Downtown Parking BIA. Describing the reasons for creating the FSABIA, a BIA proponent and business owner stated that the entity gave ratepayers “the closest to complete control” of the area (Mar 1992). While technically separate entities, the three of the early four downtown BIAs that the DSA managed had a lot of “cross pollination” and often shared ideas (MID Interview A). Eventually, under the DSA’s direction, the four downtown BIAs merged into the MID in 1999. Generally, BIAs cover one district or commercial area; however the MID is somewhat unique in that it covers a rather extensive geographic area and several different neighborhoods and districts in downtown Seattle (PSBIA Interview, OED Interview, Hoyt-Agge 2007).

Championing the reason to unify the downtown BIAs, the DSA often framed the argument in accord with neoliberal, public choice theory: the DSA underscored that an amalgamated downtown BIA would be “more efficient,” allow for more uniform coverage, and help the collective downtown districts “leverage” more recourses and networking possibilities from each other, as well as the municipal government (MID Interview A, Erb 1998). One former president of the DSA described the push for the unification of downtown BIAs in neoliberal infused rhetoric of interurban competition, citing that “the reason that we are doing this is to keep the downtown competitive in the marketplace” (Erb 1998). Again, notably absent from this newly unified BIA was the Belltown neighborhood, where the DRBIA had been in operation (Broberg 2003). In addition to leading the charge to create the MID, the DSA was later instrumental in the creation of the largest BIA in Seattle, the Seattle Tourism

Improvement District (STID). More information on the STID will be covered later on in this chapter.

According to information given during interviews, the primary reasons for the creation of BIAs in Seattle were fairly consistent. First, interviewees commonly highlighted issues of cleanliness and/or safety as the major impetus for BIA creation. Importantly, interviewees seemed most concerned about perceptions of crime in the downtown area, rather than the crime itself. In a discussion of the formation of the earlier downtown BIAs, one MID representative indicated that the original impetus for BIAs in Seattle was centered on providing cost-effective private forms of public safety. In this regard, the interviewee indicated that the real public safety issue “wasn’t the crime...it was more the perception and the discomfort that one would have in certain areas of downtown, not all areas, but some that are-- that are really tough for all DTs to deal with then and now” (MID Interview A). As indicated by this quote, the perception of safety is still a major factor in the continued existence of BIAs in Seattle. In fact, another MID representative indicated that the “main focus” of BIA programming remains to “develop a strategy in how to address the perception” of crime in downtown emphasizing that for many the “perception, if it feels safe, it is safe” (MID Interview D). Second, interviewees commonly argued that BIAs were increasingly important mechanisms for sustaining the necessary level of services in the area as state and local service provisions continue to retreat. While most interviewees described BIA services as “supplemental” to city services, they also noted that city services were limited and increasingly becoming more so. For example, one interviewee repeatedly referred to

City “budget restraints” (MID Interview A). Another claimed that the City of Seattle’s budgets were “not able to complete all the tasks they were able to do maybe 50 or 100 years ago,” making Seattle’s “climate ripe” for the emergence of BIAs (MID Interview B). Perhaps in the most telling interview, one MID representative stated that BIAs in Seattle were essential to “really fill in the gaps that the city was having troubles fulfilling” (MID Interview D). This individual further underscored that while the BIAs and municipal entities have clearly “defined roles of who is doing what” that the BIAs are constantly being asked to “do a bit more” (MID Interview D). Third, the interviewees noted marketing of their areas as another major impetus for BIA creation. Next, the interviewee from the Columbia City BIA mentioned that the “ad hoc” nature of the local business chamber in that neighborhood was not sufficient as it was not cost effective or energy efficient and therefore, an institutionalization of programming was necessary and possible through BIA creation (CCBIA Interview). Put another way, coupled with government retrenchment, free riders and voluntary funding mechanisms were seen as not conducive to engendering the results necessary for economic growth by local organizers. The BIA model limits free riding by forcing all businesses and property owners to involuntarily pay into the BIA budget through an assessment fee determined by each BIA’s assessment methodology. Thus, in contrast to local business associations and business chambers, commonly run by voluntary membership fees, the institutionalization of BIAs allows for a mandatory collection of money (done by the municipality) with or without the consent of all business or property owners within that area. Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that BIA models were attractive

due to their ability to directly connect the municipal government and their entities. In particular, interviewees mentioned that BIAs allowed for the circumvention of the exhaustive pursuit of finding the right municipal department by instead having a direct connection with the city government.

All together, these statements illuminate how BIAs are increasingly significant players in the redrawn, neoliberal state, assuming more and more responsibility for public services as the municipal government continues to withdraw or “roll back” from these types of traditional services (Peck and Tickell 2002). This municipal retrenchment is not an isolated occurrence but rather reflects the larger restructuring and devolution of federal and state level services (See Chapter Two, Peck and Tickell 2002, Lewis 2010, Ward 2006, Morcol and Zimmerman 2006). Importantly, this devolution of city services to private –quasi public entities facilitates the creation of “cities within cities,” wherein BIAs with very specific urban geographies have access to a set of services (and the ear of local government), while others do not (Lewis 2010, 188). In these areas, the city is no longer the primary scale of services but rather the BIA boundaries are now the new scale. This rescaling of urban governance becomes highly problematic for areas often without BIAs or even without BIAs with large budgets and comprehensive services.

Finally, many interviewees rationalized the appeal of BIAs through neoliberal inspired public choice theory. Public choice theory stresses that rational individuals will select services that ensure the most cost friendly economies of scale through efficiency, affordability, and competition. As Lewis (2012) states, “the best

local governments are therefore the ones that capitalized on the competitive pressures of the market to provide services to their citizens” (189). Illustrating public choice theory’s privileging of private services over public services, interviewees commonly noted local BIAs’ capacities to ensure efficient services through a “do-it yourself” approach. In particular, interviewees highlighted that ratepayers could dictate funds to directly address perceived issues within the downtown. One ratepayer even claimed the BIAs allow ratepayers “control over our own destiny” in contrast to city-wide tax funded services, which the interviewee implied generated little to no visible change in contrast to BIA services and programming (MID Interview A).

Seattle BIA Variances

BIAs within the City of Seattle demonstrate a wide degree of variance in regards to geographic size, assessment methodologies, budget size, organizational structure, and services offered (Ward 2007, Gross 2005). The nine Seattle BIAs consist of the MID (which was formed from 4 BIAs, as discussed above), the Pioneer Square BIA, the International District BIA, the Broadway BIA, the Seattle Tourism Improvement District (STID), the University District BIA (UDBIA), the West Seattle Junction BIA (WSJBIA), the SODO BIA, and the Columbia City BIA (CCBIA) (See Figure 1). A few other BIAs are also currently being considered in the areas of Lake City and Ballard, however these remain in the planning and legislative phases of BIA formation (OED interview, City of Seattle Handbook 2012, 4). Most of the Seattle BIA are located within close geographic proximity to the CBD and in older districts

(See Image 2). However, in Seattle, there are outliers to this trend, with three BIAs existing outside of a one mile radius of downtown.

Image 2

Location of Seattle BIAs



Source: City of Seattle website. Retrieved from:
<http://www.seattle.gov/economicdevelopment/oisi/BIA.htm>

Gross (2005) created a BIA typology that consists of three different categories of BIAs based on geographic size, budget size, and the businesses and properties within a BIA's jurisdiction. Her three categories were: 1) the corporate BIA, 2) the main street BIA, and 3) the community BIA. According to Gross' typology, corporate BIAs were those that had budgets greater than \$1 million, a

median geographic scope of 31 blocks, mutli-level high rises, and the dominant group of property owners within the BIA were corporate and commercial interests. Next, Main Street BIAs were those that had budgets ranging from 300,000 to \$1 million, a median geographic scope of 10 blocks, less than three story commercial and shopping spaces, and the dominant groups of property owners within the BIA were retail and property owners. Finally, community BIAs had budgets less than \$300,000, a median geographic scope of 14 blocks, street-level commercial and shopping spaces, and the dominant group of property owners within the BIA was retail and property owners. Although several BIAs in Seattle do not fit perfectly in the confines of Gross' typology, following her typology suggestions, I assert that Seattle has two corporate BIAs, four main street BIAs, and two community BIA (See Chart 2). (For this study, I did not categorize the SODO BIA due to the general lack of knowledge on this newly formed BIA). The following section examines the organizational structure, budget size, geographic size, and services provided by Seattle BIAs according to their classification under Goss' typology.

Table 3

Gross (2005) influenced typology of BIAs in Seattle

Corporate	Main Street	Neighborhood
Metropolitan Improvement District	Pioneer Square	Columbia City
Seattle Tourism Improvement Area	Broadway/Capitol Hill	Chinatown/ International District
	West Seattle Junction	
	University District	

Data Source: OED BIA Handbook 2012, MID website, VISIT Seattle website, Pioneer Square BIA website

Seattle Corporate BIAs: MID and the STID

In Seattle, the two corporate BIAs are the MID and the STDI. As discussed above, the MID was formed in 1999 through the consolidation of four previous downtown BIAs. The geographic boundaries of the MID spread from Denny Way to the North, First Avenue to the South, the Waterfront to the West, and the Interstate Five to the North. Given this spread in total the MID expands over 285 blocks in the downtown area and continues to grow (See Image 3). In 2013, the MID incorporated the area of Belltown, a gentrifying neighborhood to the north of the downtown, into its jurisdiction. This area had once been covered by the DRBIA. Notable neighborhoods and districts within the MID boundary include: Belltown, Denny Triangle, Waterfront, Retail Core, Office Core, and Pioneer Square.

According to 2012 information, the MID had a budget of \$5.6 million dollars, making it the second largest budget of any Seattle BIA, after the STDI (MID Business Plan 2013, OED BIA Handbook 2012). Of this budget, \$5.4 million comes from assessing property owners within the district according to the sum of the total assessed property value (29 cents/\$1,000) and the land area of lot (31 cents/sq. ft.). Located in the downtown, the MID assesses some of the highest property values and largest high-rise and commercial buildings in the city. In addition to this assessment, the MID also receives additional funds from voluntary assessments (\$125,000), grants (\$52,000), events fees and sponsorships (\$32,000) and miscellaneous funds (\$90,000). Additionally, in 2013, the MID was awarded another large grant by the City of Seattle; the MID was given \$288,000 for their work in the City Center Initiative, described in length in the following chapter.

Image 3

Metropolitan Improvement District (MID) Boundaries



Source: Downtown Seattle Association website. Retrieved from:
<http://www.downtownseattle.com/2013/05/city-council-approval-launches-new-era-for-the-metropolitan-improvement-district/>

Out of Seattle BIAs, the MID offers the most expansive services, with particular focus on clean and safe services, marketing and promotion, and capital improvements (See Chart 4). The MID also employs the largest amount of personnel with 86 full time employees, including eleven management positions, eight program positions, two office support positions, and sixty five clean and safe ambassador positions (OED BIA Handbook 2012, 13). Six of the clean and safe ambassador positions are funded through a municipal grant. While a more in-depth discussion on MID services and programming is provided in Chapter Five, what is notable is that MID's geographic size, budget, and programming has changed over the past few years.

The Seattle Tourism Improvement District (STID) is somewhat of an outlier within general BIA trends, both in Seattle and in other metropolitan areas. Created in 2011, the single purpose of the STID is explicitly to “increase leisure tourism to Seattle” through advertisement campaigns. The creation of the STID coincides with the state slashing the budget and then subsequently closing of the Washington State Tourism Department (Yardley 2011, DSA Annual Report 2012, Burgess 2011). The DSA supported the creation of the STDI stating that the private-public model “creates a more stable and sustainable funding” to “promote travel downtown following the closure of the state’s tourism office” (DSA Annual Report 2012). The STID covers most of the greater downtown area, including areas with other BIAs in place. The geographic boundaries of the STID spread from Lake Union to the North, SODO to the south, the waterfront the West, and Twelfth Street to the East. Overall, the STID covers the neighborhoods and districts of Lower Queen Anne, South Lake Union, Belltown, Denny Triangle, the Waterfront, Retail Core, Office Core, Pioneer Square, the Chinatown-International District, Capital Hill, and First Hill. The STDI has a budget of around \$4-6 million, all of which comes from the assessment of area ratepayers. Unlike the MID, STID ratepayers are limited to assessing hotels within the district with over 60 rooms. The assessment formula for these hotels is a surcharge of \$2.00 per occupied hotel room per night. The management of the STDI is undertaken by the Seattle Conventions and Visitors Bureau, also known as VISIT Seattle, a private organization run by city boosters. The DSA serves as a partner in VISIT Seattle organization. Services offered by the STDI are limited to marketing and promotions only.

Table 4**Incorporation Year, Geographic Size, and Mission Statement of Seattle BIAs**

	Year esta.	Organization Style	Blocks	Mission
Pioneer Square	1983	Independent	90	Betterment of Pioneer Square through advocacy, programming, marketing, and community action
Broadway-Capital Hill	1986	Broader Organization	12	Maintaining Broadway as a safe, clean place to shop, socialize and do business; activate and invigorate the retail corridor of Broadway
Seattle Retail Core BIA	1986	Strong DSA presence		
West Seattle Junction	1987	Broader Organization	N/A	N/A
Central Waterfront BIA	1990	Strong DSA presence		
First and Second Avenue BIA	1991	Strong DSA presence		
Chinatown International District	1994	Independent	40* estimate	Promote economic vitality of the district, encourage responsible business development / support improvement of the quality of life
University District	1996	Broader Organization	15* estimate	Ensure the cleanliness, safety, and beautify of the University District
Metropolitan Improvement District	1999	Umbrella Organization, DSA	285	Maintain Seattle's healthy, vibrant urban core.
Columbia City	2009	Independent	N/A	Make a pleasant and convenient one-stop shopping location for residents in the surrounding neighborhoods; destination for dining / entertainment.
Seattle Tourism Improvement Area	2011	Umbrella, VISIT Seattle	N/A	N/A

Notes: shaded grey areas indicate disbanded BIAs incorporated in the MID in 1999

Source: City of Seattle Handbook (2012) and various BIA websites, Author's analysis

Table 5

Budget (2012) size, grants, and assessment formula of Seattle BIAs

	Budget Total	Grants	Assessment Formula
Pioneer Square	\$560,000	\$200,000	-Floor Area (starting in 2013) -Gross retail Sales -Gross income
Broadway-Capital Hill	\$435,000	\$123,000	-Gross income -Flat Fee -Min. \$50 -Max \$3500
Seattle Retail Core BIA			
West Seattle Junction	\$418,000	\$12,000	-Gross income -Parking Spaces -Flat Fee
Central Waterfront BIA			
First and Second Avenue BIA			
Chinatown International District	\$300,000	\$10,000	-Floor Area -Land Area -Parking Spaces -Hotel Rooms -Flat Fee
University District	\$422,000	\$62,500	-Floor Area -Land Area -Parking Spaces -Hotel Rooms -Apartments
Metropolitan Improvement District	\$5.7 million	\$52,000	-Total Assessed Property Value -Land Area
Columbia City	\$56,000	\$3,000	-Land Area -Total Assessed Property Value
Seattle Tourism Improvement Area	\$5-7 million	\$0	-surcharge per occupied hotel per room per night

Notes: shaded grey areas indicate disbanded BIAs incorporated in the MID in 1999
Source: City of Seattle Handbook (2012) and various BIA websites

Table 6

Full-time staff and complete service provision offered by BIAs in Seattle (X's denote the services are offered by a BIA)

	Staff (FTE)	Social Services	Marketing Services	Safety and Cleanliness Services	Street-scaping	Transportation	Economic Programs
Pioneer Square	4	X	X		X		X
Broadway/ Capital Hill	1	X	X	X	X	X	X
West Seattle Junction	1.2		X	X	X	X	X
Chinatown/ International District	3		X	X	X	X	X
University District	1.2		X	X	X	X	
Metropolitan Improvement District	86	X	X	X	X	X	X
Columbia City	.13			X	X		
Seattle Tourism Improvement Area	N/A		X				

Source: OEDBIA Handbook (2012) and various BIA websites

Main Street BIAs: Pioneer Square BIA, Broadway BIA, West Seattle Junction BIA, and University District BIA

The four Main Street BIAs in Seattle are the Pioneer Square BIA, Broadway BIA, West Seattle Junction BIA, and University District BIA. The Pioneer Square BIA, formed in the area just south of downtown, was the first Seattle BIA to be formed in Seattle in 1983. While safety and cleanliness was a concern, the major driving motivation behind the formation of the original PSBIA was marketing (PSBIA Interview). Originally the geographic area of PSBIA was rather small and contained

incongruous parcels, not something that appears to be common in BIA formation, and suggests that the BIA was more akin to an involuntary business association. Given this format, the PSBIA faltered throughout the early 2000s. However, in 2013, under new direction, the PSBIA restructured and expanded its geographic boundaries to align with the federally recognized Historic District creating a larger, congruous district (PSBIA Interview). As such, the PSBIA is now much larger and uniformly covers the area between Columbia Street to the North, Royal Brougham Way to the South, Alaska Way to the West, and Fourth Avenue to the East. In total, the PSBIA expands approximately 90 blocks.

Of the PSBIA 2012 budget, \$350,000 came from assessing property owners within the district according to the square footage (20 cents/square foot), the gross retail sales (\$1.25/\$1,000), gross business income (31 cents/\$1000), and membership dues (with a minimum of \$25 and a maximum of \$4,000). Thus, in difference to the MID, the PSBIA's assessments are not solely based off of property values or size, but also take into account sales and income. In addition to this assessment, the PSBIA also receives additional funds from grants (\$200,000), events fees and sponsorships (\$10,000) and miscellaneous funds (\$1,500). The interviewee noted that the PSBIA obtained more than \$10 million in construction mitigation funds for the Pioneer Square neighborhood (PSBIA Interview, PSBIA Operating Plan 2013). Much of the funding going directly to the PSBIA is connected to reparation payments for the nearby deep-tunnel boring project (PSBIA Interview). In total, through additional resources, the PSBIA has received over \$1.8 million in the past three years.

According to the forthcoming projected budget the Pioneer Square BIA will spend \$236,000 (32%) on marketing programs, \$186,750 on business development and recruitment, and \$110,000 on improving neighborhood advocacy, which includes improving “street civility” and public safety (PSBIA Plan, 9). The Pioneer Square BIA employs seven full time staff members, with one management position and six programs positions. Two staff members are funded through a grant program (PSBIA Interview). The PSBIA is managed by the Alliance for Pioneer Square. While local non-profit groups are part of the BIA due to the PSBIA’s assessment by square footage, local retail and business owners dominate the make up of the Pioneer Square BIA ratepayer’s board (PSBIA Interview, PSBIA Operating Plan 2013). The Pioneer Square BIA states that the organization is “viewed as a credible voice for the community” (PSBIA Operating Plan 2013, 4). However, this voice for the community neglects to mention the dominance of local business and property owners and the absence of representation within the organization of the BIA by residents and other marginalized populations outside of non-profit organizations in the area.

Notably, the PSBIA does not have a clean and safe program as MID Clean and Safety Ambassadors operate in this area. Although not common in other cities, several BIAs in Seattle have overlapping boundaries, such as the MID and PSBIA, and the STDI and the MID, PSBIA, CIDBIA, and BBIA. Discussing this unique overlapping nature of BIAs in Pioneer Square, the PSBIA representative noted that DSA leadership, during the creation of the MID, stressed that inclusion of the Pioneer Square neighborhood in the MID was essential to the turn around of the downtown

area. The PSBIA representative noted that property and business owners in Pioneer Square were at first hesitant to join the MID as they feared that the DSA “wanted to take over Pioneer Square” (PSBIA Interview). However, after much deliberation and coaxing, business and property owners eventually acquiesced to the DSA joining the MID after it was clear that the two BIAs would have distinctive operational functions in Pioneer Square with the PSBIA focusing on marketing and economic development and the MID focusing on Clean and Safe programs. In return for joining the MID, the DSA provided financial assistance to help reorganize the PSBIA and the Pioneer Square Alliance (PSBIA Interview). The PSBIA representative noted that the two entities have a great working relationship and often times collaborate on policy. For example, the PSBIA has become a strong proponent of the City Center Initiative with the MID to “address environmental disorder and incivility” in the downtown. This program will be further unpacked in Chapter Five (PSBIA Strategy 2015). The PSBIA interviewee and the PSBIA Plan 2014 frequently touted the relationship between the MID and BIA, stressing that the MID allows the area to “ensure effective” programming (PSBIA Strategy 2015, 8). Other programming offered by the Pioneer Square BIA includes “re-branding the neighborhood” through symbolic and representational programs; most often done by marketing programs and the accentuation of positive local press releases about the area (PSBIA Plan 2014, 8; PSBIA Interview).

Founded in 1986, the second oldest BIA in Seattle was formed directly north of the downtown, in the Capital Hill neighborhood. Geographically, the Broadway BIA (BBIA) is relatively small for a Main Street BIA, only expanding a total of

approximately twenty blocks. The BIA spans from Broadway Avenue from Roy Street to the North and Pine Street to the South. Local retail business interests, through the Capital Hill Chamber of Commerce, manage the Broadway BIA. In 2012, the Broadway BIA had a budget of \$435,000 dollars. Of this budget, \$130,000 originated from assessing property owners within the district according to the sum of the gross business income (\$2/\$1000), and flat fees (ranging from a minimum of \$1,750 and a maximum of \$3,500) for financial intuitions and the local community college). Thus, like the PSBIA, the main contributor to the BBIA's budget is the gross income assessment rather than a property assessment. In addition to this assessment, the BBIA also receives additional funds from grants (\$123,000), events fees and sponsorships (\$45,000) and miscellaneous funds (37,000). The BBIA offers the some services, however the degree of services pales in comparison to the MID (see Table 6, pg. 86). The BBIA's main services are cleanliness and safety, marketing, and beautification programs. With only one full time staff member, the majority of the programs pursued by the BBIA are contracted out to other private vendors. For example, the BBIA's clean and safety program is run by CleanScapes, a private garbage and cleaning company that offers sanitation collection, graffiti removal, and sidewalk washing. The OED representative mentioned that the BBIA was currently undergoing considerable restructuring(OED Interview).

The West Seattle Junction BIA was the first BIA established outside of the direct downtown area. Founded in 1987, the West Seattle Junction BIA (WSJBIA) is located to the southwest of the CBD by approximately seven miles. The WSJBIA is one of two independently managed BIAs in Seattle, having no connection to a larger

business association or chamber of commerce (BIA handbook). In 2012, the WSJBIA had a budget of \$418,000 dollars. Of this budget, \$263,000 comes from assessing property owners within the district according to the sum of the gross business income (\$1.375/\$1000), parking spaces (\$52.50-105.00 per space) and flat fees (varies). Once again, the main contributor to the BIA's budget is the gross incomes assessment rather than a property assessment. In addition to this assessment, the WSJBIA also receives additional funds from grants (\$12,000), and, a huge contributor to the overall budget, events fees and sponsorships (\$143,000). The WSJBIA employs 1.2 full time staff members. The WSJBIA offers some services; the primary services appear to be streetscaping, such as maintaining decorative additions, cleaning services, and management of parking lots. The WSJBIA also contracts out its clean and safety programs to private vendors.

The final Main Street BIA is the University District BIA (UDBIA) founded in 1986. Like the WSJBIA, the UDBIA is located outside of the CBD to the north near the University of Washington campus. The UDBIA expands approximately 15 blocks, spanning University Avenue from 52nd Street to the North and Campus Parkway to the South. The UDBIA is managed by an umbrella group of multiple organizations under the U District Partnership. The U District Partnership is also currently undergoing a process of reorganization (OED interview). The UDBIA has a total budget of \$485,000 dollars. Of this budget, only \$145,000 comes from assessing property owners within the district. The UDBIA has the most complicated BIA assessment formula. The assessment is the sum of floor area (5.7-11.4 cents/sq. ft.), land area of lot (5.7-11.4 cents/sq. ft.), parking spaces (\$5.72/space), hotel room

(\$11.44/room), apartments (\$5.72/unit), and membership dues. In addition to this assessment, the UDBIA also receives additional funds from grants (\$62,500), events fees and sponsorships (\$173,000) and miscellaneous funds (\$1,500). Unlike other Seattle BIAs, the University District BIA does not offer business recruitment and retention services. The University District BIA employs 1.2 full time staff members.

Community BIAs: Chinatown-International District and Columbia City BIA

The city of Seattle has two community BIAs, the Chinatown-International District BIA and the Columbia City BIA. Formed in 1994, the Chinatown-International District BIA (CIDBIA) has a total budget of \$300,000 dollars; putting it on the cusp of being a Main Town sized BIA. Of this budget, \$190,000 comes from assessing properties within the district. The assessment formula for the CIDBIA is the sum of floor area (3.3-13 cents/sq. ft.), land area of lot (3.3-13 cents/sq. ft.), parking spaces (\$5.24-6.55/space), hotel rooms (\$19.65-26.20/room), and flat fees (\$98.25-131). In addition to this assessment, the CIDBIA also receives additional funds from grants (\$10,000), events fees and sponsorships (\$85,000) and miscellaneous funds (\$15,000). The CIDBIA employs 3 full time staff members and geographically spans approximately 40 blocks. The CIDBIA also contracts its safety and cleanliness programs out to private contractors. Its major programs include organization of the area's largest festivals, including the Lunar New Year Celebration, marketing promotion, and beatification programs (Chinatown-International District BIA website). The CIDBIA also hires additional off-duty SPD officers, however the budget for this is very limited in contrast to MID sponsored

SPD hiring. Like the BBIA, the CIDBIA is independent of other business associations or chamber of commerce's.

Finally, the last Seattle BIA is the Columbia City BIA (CCBIA) founded recently in 2009. Geographically, the CCBIA is the city's smallest BIA extending only five blocks by two blocks, centered on Rainer Street. In 2012, the CCBIA had a total budget of \$56,000 dollars. The budget comes from an assessment of the total land area of lot (4.2 cents/sq. ft.) and total assessed property value (20 cents/ \$1,000), making it the only other Seattle BIA to use property value in its assessment formula. In addition to this assessment, the CCBIA also receives some additional funds from grants (\$3,000). Given this budget, the CCBIA only offers a few services focusing on safety, cleanliness, and appearance. The CCBIA interviewee noted that the CCBIA has a safety element but that the BIA has largely "not stepped" up in the utilization of this program. As such, the program is mainly a rapport with the police, reporting trends ratepayers see in the area. In the future, the CCBIA would like to develop a more integrated approach with the SPD "similar to the one they have downtown (MID) already" to deal with homeless individuals (CCBIA Interview). More information on the MID program is explained in the subsequent chapter. Discussing the necessity of this program in the future, the interviewee stated that they "wanted to get a head start on this, as problems grow" mentioning that a forthcoming grocery store in the neighborhood, a local organic chain, would likely bring in more panhandlers and homeless individuals.

The majority of the BIA budget goes to CleanScapes to clean up the neighborhood. The CCBIA employs .13 full time staff members, a part-time manager

that works one day a week. The manager primarily works as the “funnel for seeking services from the city” (CCBIA Interview). In the creation of the CCBIA, the City of Seattle provided technical assistance through the contracting of a consultant to help set up the CCBIA. Of all the BIAs in Seattle, the CCBIA has the smallest budget and service provision of all Seattle BIAs. The formation of Columbia City BIA also coincides with the increased gentrification of the Columbia City neighborhood and the addition of a Link Light Rail station in the area (Siminson 2011, Curl 2008).

Discussing the timing of the formation of the CCBIA, the interviewee stated:

“This neighborhood has changed greatly in about 15 years. Today its nothing like it was 15 years ago. It’s revitalized and became popular. There is more people, more activities and it just reached a point in its evolution where a bootstrap volunteer effort in these couple areas was going to be enough.”

Siminson (2011) discussed the gentrification of Columbia City noted that following a “state-facilitated gentrification program” in the 1990s, Columbia City witnessed the growth of craft consumption businesses, such as restaurants and bars, along the neighborhood’s main commercial street, Rainer Avenue. With the growth of this sector in the neighborhood, residential options in Columbia City “changed dramatically” as the construction of higher-end condos and apartments skyrocketed the cost of housing in the area to the point that it was “not affordable or not culturally accessible” for many former residents of the neighborhood (Siminson 2011, 152). With the upshot in housing and rental prices, the demographics of the area also significantly changed with the white, middle class population showing the most significant gains in the neighborhood, while African American populations decreased (Siminson 2011). Discussing the impact on the community, Siminson noted that “stayers,” residents of the neighborhood prior to gentrification, felt that:

“the redevelopment of the commercial strip has been geared towards middle-class gentrifiers, while older, stayer-oriented establishments have increasingly disappeared. In addition, stayers have virtually no say in neighborhood decision making processes...Many stayers feel isolated and claim that gentrification has pushed them to the physical and symbolic fringes of the neighborhood. Obvious economic disparities and cultural differences between stayers and gentrifiers, as well as racial tensions, cause certain stayers to feel that they have are now “out of place,” despite the fact that they have lived in the neighborhood longer than most middle-class residents” (2011, 152-4)

Given that BIAs are dominated by business and property owners, as “stayer” establishments close and new establishments geared toward the attraction of the “creative class” continue to grow, the CCBIA potentially represents yet another way in which “stayers” are disconnected from participating in neighborhood decision making processes in Columbia City.

Furthermore, a commonly utilized rhetoric for attracting the “creative class” is the “livability” of a city (Florida 2002, Peck 2005, McCann 2007). From growth coalition materials, it is evident that the Link Light Rail is utilized as a tool to promote “livability” within Seattle (DSA Annual Report 2012, PSBIA Report 2013). Therefore, it is worth noting that the creation of the CCBIA corresponds with the opening of the Central Link Line on the Light Rail system. The Central Link Line, in discussion since the early 1990s, was opened in 2009 and currently provides public transportation services from the Westlake Area to the Seattle-Tacoma Airport with stops in Pioneer Square and Columbia City, amongst others (soundtransit.org). Studies on the effects of the light-rail system in Seattle are underdeveloped and should be pursued by future research. In particular, research focusing on the potential of ecological gentrification in neighborhoods like Columbia City because of

the Light Rail and other new transit options in Seattle should be examined (Dooling 2009, Tretter 2013).

BIA and Municipal Government Relations

In Seattle, the municipal government and local elites have a long established history of promoting the creation and utilization of BIAs as “revitalization” tools for commercial and neighborhood districts within the city. In the interviews, all BIA representatives indicated that relations with municipal entities were very positive. In the case of the MID, it appears that originally the municipality had some reservations concerning the magnitude of MID programming. These reservations were eventually quelled as the city realized the value of having the MID as a partner in the downtown. On this topic, an MID interviewee noted:

“I think that there has been a relationship there in the past, but they just haven’t quite known where we start and stop and how we could partner better with them. I think that there has been some fear that we were taking over traditional city responsibilities. I think that the longer the MID and DSA are around the more that they are seeing us as a valued partner that they could look to help with some challenging issues out there” (MID Interview B).

This partnership between the MID and the municipality continues to grow more complex and integrated (See Chapter Five). According to another interviewee, the nature of the MID and municipal government partnership operates according to the old adage “scratch our back, scratch your back,” which aptly describes the “blurring line” between private and public entities (MID Interview D). Indicative of this mutual back scratching, the MID is now a grantee of City of Seattle funds, as well as grantor of municipal funds. The MID receives grants from the Human Services Department (HSD), as well as Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), but also gives grants to

the city to fund additional SPD officers in the downtown. Additionally, utilizing data collected by MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors, the MID will “go to council” for the municipal government in an effort to secure funding for particular downtown projects that the MID and the city would like to see tackled (MID Interview C).

The municipal government, particularly the OED, provides ample assistance to get BIAs up and running in Seattle. The OED representative described the City’s relationship to BIA creation, saying “we kind of have been more of the supporters and promoters of BIAs” (OED Interview). In 2001, the City of Seattle bolstered its support for BIA creation with Seattle City Council Resolution 30389. This resolution stated that the City of Seattle “reaffirms its support of the use of BIAs as effective tools for economic redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization” and importantly, in addition to acknowledging their benefits, the city also agreed to “develop model methodologies for the establishment of BIAs” through the Department of Finance, OED, and the Department of Executive Administration. The city promotes the establishment of BIAs in the form of offering consultant services, offering technical assistance, granting funds, notifying all proposed assessment ratepayers in a perspective BIA area, networking opportunities, and the rubberstamping of BIA renewals (City of Seattle BIA Handbook 2012, OED Interview 2014). The OED representative suggested that the municipal government’s support for BIAs is predicated on the fact that BIAs represent “sustainable” and “locally” sourced entities (OED Interview). As such, one of the largest services that the municipal government performs is the “promotion” of BIAs in the city. But this is a

delicate subject matter according to the OED representative, who stated the following:

“We don’t want to be seen as coming in and saying you must form a BIA. It must be locally, something that the local community wants and explores and that something we will support them if they want to. We want them to know about it, so we talk about it and tell people what we have to offer them but we can’t, its kind of a fine line, you don’t want the city sort of saying we want you to form a BIA, because there is always the issues of local communities thinking that we don’t want to keep supporting them with out basic city services” (OED Interview).

One form of promotional assistance provided by the OED is a handbook detailing how to start and then sustainably manage a BIA in Seattle. The OED BIA Handbook promotes the continued privatization of municipal functions as it suggests that BIAs “realize that the district’s challenges – such as crime, litter, graffiti, declining revenues, and storefront vacancies are not being solved by government programs” (OED BIA Handbook 2012, 3). As such, the state unmistakably acts as an active participant in the neoliberal devolution of government services by weakening “confidence in government” and while also stipulating that privatized services could more efficiently solve local problems (Lewis 2010). Furthermore, according to the City’s BIA Handbook, the first step to creating a BIA is to “bring the community together” to determine if a BIA is desired within that area (OED BIA Handbook 2012). However, again, given that only business and property owners vote on the creation of a BIA, the city’s use of “community” is troublesome as it essentially conflates and limits the notion of community to members of the business community, thus excluding and regulating residents and other marginalized populations, such as the homeless, as outsiders of that community.

Finally, in discussion of BIAs and municipals partnerships, the OED representative and BIA representatives mentioned the ability to leverage services from the municipal government due to having a clearer, more efficient communication channel to various City of Seattle departments that allows BIAs to bypass regular jurisdictional issues. Describing this, one interviewee stated that BIA and government relationship allowed for issues to not “fall into the cracks” as they “connect and put everybody together” in order to “have dialogues with the right people” (MID Interview A). Thus, in addition to supplying supplemental services to their geographic areas, BIAs also have a more direct way of garnering a municipality’s attention to issues within their area than neighborhoods or districts without BIAs. When asked about options for communities unable to create or sustain a BIA, the OED representative said that “if you don’t have that coordinating point, I could imagine, it’s just whatever happens” and that “there are a lot of programs throughout the city but it is hard to navigate them all” (OED Interview). Given this, in addition to begging questions of service inequalities, there is also a question of disproportional municipal responsiveness.

Accountability and Democratic Nature of Seattle BIAs

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two), the subject of whether BIAs are democratic and accountable has been explored by a number of researchers (Briffault 1999, Morcol and Zimmerman 2006, Morcol and Wolf 2006, Schaller and Modan 2005, Hoyt 2005, Justice and Goldsmith 2006, Hoyt and Gopel-Agge 2007, Hochleutner 2003, 2003). This is particularly important with BIAs because there is

a question of representation: do BIAs represent businesses or residents in the areas in which they are located? While every state dictates its own legislation on BIAs, almost all states concentrate most, if not all, power and authority to business and property owners by limiting leadership positions to business and property owners within the BIA. Additionally, BIA-voting procedures are generally open strictly to business or property owners. In the very few cases in which BIAs do allow residents some voting rights, they are usually weighted less than the votes of business and property owners. MacDonald and Grunwald (2013) sum this up, stating, “in short, the BIA voting structure can deprive local residents of equal representation in quasi-governmental decision making” (627). Furthermore, some believe this issues extends beyond the representation of residents. Others fear that already marginalized groups, such as the homeless, street vendors, and the working poor, are disenfranchised from representation entirely (Briffault 1999, Schaller and Modan 2005, Miraftab 2007, Michel 2013).

In Seattle, each BIA is ultimately accountable to a ratepayer’s advisory board that oversees the budget and spending of the BIAs. These advisory boards are made up primarily of businesses and property owners within the district. The exception to this is the Columbia City BIA, which allows residents to join and serve on the board. Every year, each ratepayer board is required to develop an annual plan for the BIA that must be approved by the majority of the district’s ratepayers. After passing the approval of the ratepayers, the annual report must be approved by the City of Seattle. This system raises questions about the democratic nature and accountability of BIAs in Seattle. Under this framework, BIAs are directly

accountable only to the ratepayers within their districts; in particular the ratepayers board and the City of Seattle. Beyond this, even within BIA membership, there are concerns of equitability as the largest and most prominent businesses and property owners are more likely to have representation on the board and therefore have disproportional representation over smaller businesses and property owners (Briffault 1999). Thus BIAs have the tendency to privilege the largest business and property owners in the district while marginalizing the voices of smaller business and property owners.

In Seattle, BIA formation requires that 60% of the total assessment to be paid supports the creation of a district (RCW 35.87A). Thus, a BIA can be formed or disbanded without the consent of the majority of property owners in a BIA if the majority of assessed property value owners so choose. A situation like this occurred in Seattle with the disbanding of the Denny Regrade BIA in 1990s. The seemingly disproportional representation by large business and property owners led Morcol and Zimmerman (2006) to conclude that BIAs “look like legal shells for already established business interests (38).” In particular, they argue that BIAs represent the interests of private organizations, such as longstanding chambers of commerce and city development corporations. The potential for larger firms to dominate BIA power structures is particularly acute in the corporate BIAs (MID and STID) in Seattle as the ratepayer boards are dominated by larger corporations (i.e. large hotel chains) and directed by powerful downtown business interests, such as the DSA. While smaller BIAs such as Main Street and community BIAs tend to have more representation from smaller ratepayers (i.e., local retailers), it still is possible

that some business owners are still marginalized within this system. Additionally this system does not offer possibilities for the incorporation of the voices of other groups outside of business and property owners, such as residents and other marginalized populations. With the exception of the Columbia City BIA, residents are not allowed to formally participate within the voting or decision-making processes. While residents are allowed to attend BIA and City of Seattle meetings, they have no formal role within the BIA power structure.

Given that populations outside of the business community rarely have the ability to access the BIA power structure, Seattle BIAs cannot be held accountable in the same way that elected public officials are held accountable (Hoyt and Gopel-Agge 2007). While Seattle BIAs are accountable to the oversight of the municipal government, the degree to which this occurs is subject to much debate. For example, Hochleutner (2003) contends that BIAs are in fact accountable to those who are chiefly impacted by BIA activities: the businesses and property owners. Yet, essentially, Hochleutner argues that BIA activities will only positively affect BIA residents, and since they do not have to fund activities, concerns by residents are far less significant than those of property and business owners.

Oversight of BIAs by the City of Seattle appears to be largely a rubber stamp of approval for their budgets and activities. Pointing to this, the municipal government has unanimously enacted each Seattle BIA (OED BIA Handbook 2012). Furthermore, it appears that the Common Council has renewed every BIA reaching its sunset date without much opposition. In addition, Seattle BIAs, like many BIAs, create their own metrics to quantify their performance as no city wide

benchmarking system is in place (Lewis 2010, Steels and Stymes 2005). For example, the Pioneer Square BIA lists its major accomplishments as 1) being a credible voice for the neighborhood, 2) being a consultant for larger projects, 3) obtaining funds to promote the neighborhood and mitigate construction costs, 4) being catalyst in City Center Initiative, 5) changing press perception of neighborhood, and 6) launching retail recruitment programs. Yet, this account provides no hard metrics about Pioneer Square BIA programs (Lewis 2010, 198).

Briffault (1999) argues that BIA formation is susceptible to “constitutional attack(26).” In fact, he claims that the ways in which BIAs are organized violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, in particular the one person, one vote clause. To date, one lawsuit has been filed against Seattle BIAs that challenges their democratic nature and accountability. In 1986 Seattle passed Seattle City Ordinance 113015, establishing the Seattle Retail Core BIA (SRCBIA), a BIA district that expanded from Second Avenue to the west to Seventh Avenue to the east to Stewart Street to the south, and Olive Way and Union Street to the north. Like the Second and First Avenue BIA, the SRCBIA was largely supported and then eventually managed by the DSA. SRCBIA would eventually be one of the three downtown BIAs folded into the umbrella downtown BIA organization, the MID. In 1988, Rodgers Clothing for Men, Inc. and Grand Furniture Company, Inc. filed a joint suit against the City of Seattle, arguing that the municipal government had overstepped its statutory basis, violating the Constitutional of Washington State, in particular the equal protection clause. This case ultimately reached the Washington Supreme Court in 1990. The majority opinion of the case ruled that the City of

Seattle “did not exceed its statutory authority” through the enactment of the SRCBIA (Seattle v Rodgers 1990). Still, the court case highlighted some widespread legal issues with BIAs, in particular the common critique that BIAs are not democratic in organization, as in this case, and the plaintiffs argued that smaller businesses were denied equal access to BIA voting structures. Furthermore, the case also stressed that BIAs have little accountability or benchmarking systems to gauge their level of success. Notably, this case did not consider the exclusion of non-BIA members, for example residents and marginalized communities, from representation and voting rights within BIAs.

Inequalities in Seattle BIA Service Provision

In a context of neoliberal devolution, BIAs are increasingly significant players in urban governance and the provision of local services. Reflecting similar patterns to those found by Lewis (2012) in Washington D.C., in Seattle, BIAs and the Seattle municipal government appears to be largely accepting of this trajectory in service provision. The Pioneer Square BIA stresses that the services provided by the BIA are meant to “extend, enhance, and fill the gaps of municipal services” (Pioneer Square BIA Plan, 2). Similarly, the City of Seattle actively promotes BIAs as “long term” and “sustainable” options for problems that are “not being solved by government programs” (OED Interview, City of Seattle BIA Handbook 2012, 3). Commonly, services provided by BIAs include some combination of consumer marketing, economic development, maintenance and cleanliness, and security programs. Yet, Morcol and Zimmerman (2008) stress that with continued

neoliberal government retrenchment, the scope and power of BIAs have expanded to cover the following eleven aspects: 1) consumer marketing; 2) economic development; 3) policy advocacy; 4) maintenance; 5) parking and transportation; 6) security; 7) social services; 8) capital investments; 9) strategic planning; 10) public space regulation, and 11) the establishment of community courts (42).

In Seattle, most BIAs offer service programming in the following areas: 1) economic development; 2) maintenance; 3) parking and transportation; 4) security; and 5) public space regulation. In addition to this, three Seattle BIAs, the MID, Pioneer Square BIA, and Broadway BIA, offer “social service” programming. The next chapter on the MID will discuss the provision of social service in greater detail. Meek and Hubler (2006) and Toth (2012) underscore that BIAs with larger budgets are able to provide increased services as well as have increased leverage as instruments of public policy, potentially augmenting present urban inequalities and inciting increased intralocal competition. This appears to be the case with Seattle BIAs. With the exception of the STDI, the largest BIAs, in terms of budget and geographic size, offer the largest range and depth of services. For example, the MID, Seattle’s largest BIA, offers extensive programming in regards to business recruitment and retention and marketing and hospitality services (see Table 5). Similarly, the MID also offers the most comprehensive security services and the most expansive safety and cleanliness programs (See Table 5). Finally, the MID is one of the only three BIAs to offer “social service” programming, and once again, it offers the most extensive social service programming of all Seattle BIAs (See Table 5). The provision and degree of services offered by BIAs and areas in Seattle with

BIAs raises some important questions regarding the potential for BIAs to exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities and increase intraurban competition in the Seattle area. Illustrating the potential to intensify inequalities and intraurban competition, business owner Marcus Charles iterated that Belltown was at service disadvantage compared to other downtown neighborhoods as it was not in the MID (Meinert and Charles 2013, para. 6) Charles claimed that joining the MID would be Belltown's "best shot at providing Belltown businesses with the same service as businesses in the other MID neighborhoods" (Meinert and Charles 2013, para. 6). While Belltown joined the MID in the summer of 2013, neighborhoods and districts unable to join the MID or create a (wealthy) BIA will more than likely be unable to keep up with their BIA-covered counterpart neighborhoods and districts.

Additionally, others suggest that BIAs have the ability to universally scale back public services, leading to the escalation of service inequities based solely on BIA provisions (Davis 1997, McFarlane 2003, Ward 2007, Lewis 2010, Toth 2012). While more research on this subject would be necessary in Seattle, previous research on BIAs suggest that wealthier districts would have the ability to match and more easily fill in gaps created by municipal cuts, while smaller BIAs or areas without BIAs would flounder. This potential scaling back of public services by municipalities also raises questions about BIAs and their impacts on the workforce. Moreover, BIAs providing services such as street cleaning, maintenance, garbage services, and social services could potentially displace full-time, unionized city workers with less stable, lower-wage positions. For example, there are now over sixty-five MID "ambassadors" in downtown Seattle. These ambassadors earn less

than city employees, have limited or no pension systems, are not unionized and therefore have weak bargaining positions, and face increased job insecurity. In the future, further research on this subject should be pursued with a longitudinal study of a BIA and the municipal services provided in an area.

Conclusion

Every Seattle BIA has a different assessment methodology, with only two BIAs utilizing total property values. Not counting the STDI, the largest BIAs in Seattle in terms of geographic scope and budget, the MID and Pioneer Square BIAs, also offer the most expansive service programs. Given the present locations and budgets of these BIAs, BIAs appear to largely favor wealthier districts and thus have the potential to further entrench and exacerbate inequities within the city. The geographic layout of BIAs in Seattle illustrate that the districts with BIAs are experiencing rapid economic growth and have the longstanding support of business elite. Furthermore, the larger BIAs in Seattle potentially have the ability to offer services beyond their smaller counterparts in terms of both the number and scope of their programs. This ultimately has the potential effect of exacerbating intraurban competition. Through expanded service provisions, larger BIAs have the potential to draw more businesses and economic opportunities to their area and by doing so, increase property values within their districts. This would then increase the overall BIA budget and therefore increase BIA services and programs. Conversely, other areas of the city that are unable to provide similar levels and scope of services will ultimately lag behind in this competition of attracting and

retaining sources of capital. As such, the system becomes self-replicating as smaller capital means smaller BIA budgets, which ultimately means that these areas will never achieve the level of service provision as larger BIAs. The topic of BIA regulation of public spaces is discussed in a case study of the MID in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: The MID and the Regulation of Public Space

In this chapter, I examine MID projects, programming, and partnerships to argue that the MID is a significant apparatus in the continued privatization of public spaces and creation of “pseudo-private” spaces in Seattle. My analysis demonstrates that the MID increasingly has set up and rolled out “innovative” regulatory mechanisms to manage downtown public spaces in an effort to create new “pseudo-private” spaces that remake the city for passive consumption rather than allow for active participation and appropriation. Those outside of achieving this goal are deemed problematic, seen as an anathema to redevelopment scheme, and therefore must be regulated or removed. This exclusionary focus limits outside individuals’ – more commonly homeless persons’ - right to the city by truncating their ability to move through and make use of urban public space. In addition, the MID also is focused on regulating demonstrators and other participants engaged in political actions. In what follows, I first discuss the MID and one of the impending redevelopment projects in the downtown, the “renaissance” of the Pike-Pine Corridor. This section aims to illustrate how the MID functions as an instrument of the property regime, operating in areas undergoing or having recently undergone large-scale development projects. Then I detail MID regulation mechanisms within the downtown area through an examination of MID programming, such as the Clean and Safe Ambassadors, partnerships with the Seattle Police Department, and Positive Activation programming. This examination of MID programming aims to illuminate the localized contexts and contingencies that influence BIA’s programming,

as well as to illuminate the deepening partnership between the MID and the City of Seattle.

Pike-Pine Corridor and the MID

Enveloping the greater Westlake area is the Pike-Pine Corridor (See Image 1 on pg. 2). According to the DSA, the geographic boundaries of the area extend from Virginia Street to the south, Seneca Street to the north, the waterfront to the west, and Interstate 5 to the east. Recently, this area has become more of a preoccupation for the DSA and other members of Seattle's urban elite. In 2013, the DSA and the MID received a \$150,000 grant from the City of Seattle to perform an assessment and recommend design ideas for the redevelopment of the Pike-Pine Corridor. The end result of this grant was a strategic action plan co-produced by the DSA and MID, entitled *A Pike-Pine Renaissance* (DSA 2013, "A Pike-Pine Renaissance"). The key objectives of this plan were listed as 1) enhance the attractiveness of the overall urban experience, 2) increase public and private investment, 3) increase downtown's competitiveness and market share with the region, and 4) inform major transportation and public space improvements (pg. 1). Through the execution of this plan, the DSA and MID stressed that downtown Seattle would "remain competitive with peer downtowns around the United States that are making investments in their public spaces to improve the pedestrian and urban experiences" (Nichol 2014, Downtown Seattle Association "Pike-Pine Renaissance" 2014). As part of this strategic action plan, the DSA and the MID interviewed a number of downtown "stakeholders," large business representatives, about issues

they wanted addressed in the Pike-Pine Corridor Renaissance. Out of the twelve-interviewee segments enumerated in the plan, four disparagingly mentioned heightened public space insecurities connected to the presence of homeless individuals or individuals exhibiting “uncivil” behaviors in this area of downtown.

The following are three such examples from the Pike-Pine corridor plan:

“Making it a place that feels safe. Without that, any physical improvements are almost for naught. A “beggar” on every corner shouldn’t become Downtown Seattle’s slogan.”

“Seattle now is not close to being the best. We have slipped. Our city core is dirty, unsafe, uncivil, uncomfortable for residents and visitors alike. As a resident, this urban slide has become untenable.”

“Uncivil behavior on the streets and parks is a chronic problem. Better policing might help, as would a larger Downtown residential population. Could Westlake Park be operated by a private non-profit that could better promote civil behavior?”

(Downtown Seattle Association (2014) “Pike-Pine Renaissance” subheading “How can we make downtown’s Pike-Pine Area the nation’s best urban experience 2014”).

These quotes succinctly illustrate several larger connected themes. First, they illuminate the ongoing “obsession” with the homeless by Seattle’s elites (Kearney 2000). This obsession, as mentioned in Chapter Three, was reinvigorated in the late 1980s, around the time of the retail and office collapse in downtown, and has been an intense political feature since. In these quotes, there are palpable concerns over the presences of the homeless in downtown. In particular, as the quotes illuminate, there are concerns over the homeless within public spaces, such as street corners and Westlake Park, which is located in the center of the Pike-Pine Corridor. The area around Westlake Park (and the park as well) was the focus of massive mega-development projects in the downtown area in the past twenty years, as discussed

in Chapter Three (see Gibson (2004) for more on the redevelopment of the Westlake area). Second, connected to the first point, the quotes highlight the now-decades old panic over social order and safety within the downtown area, characterized by business elites' fixation on the seemingly destructive "uncivil" conditions currently festering in the downtown. For example, the first quote illuminates the necessity of projects of reassurance in effort to fully realize Seattle's mobilization of the spectacle. The quote clearly suggests that redevelopment projects currently occurring in downtown are pointless if the presence of beggars continue to threaten the intended target audiences of these redevelopments. Finally, importantly, the stakeholder quotes illuminate the contours of the changing property regime in Seattle. The most telling of these is the third quote in which a stakeholder inquired about the expansion of private management entities and increased regulatory mechanisms in downtown public spaces in order to rescue the purported wanton downtown Seattle from "uncivil behavior."

These discourses are not new for Seattle; rather, as overviewed earlier, they have been elements of the city's redevelopment for the past few decades, particularly in the mobilization of the spectacle and projects of reassurance (See Chapter Three, Gibson 2004). But what is changing is the degree to which private-public entities, such as the MID, are able to roll out regulatory controls in public spaces downtown, especially in areas earmarked for redevelopment projects, such as the Pike-Pine Corridor. So while the MID performs its programs throughout the downtown area (under the organization's geographic prevue), there are certain areas and public spaces within the downtown that have peaked the MID's attention

more than others. These include areas such as the Pike-Pine Corridor and the Westlake Area, as well as Pioneer Square. In these areas, the MID concentrates additional programming, service energies and resources. Again, importantly, these areas correspond to the neighborhoods in Seattle that have undergone, or are soon going to undergo, massive development in the form of mega cultural-retail projects, public infrastructure projects, large service sector projects, and large residential projects (see Chapter Three for more details on this subject matter).

Property regimes (as described in detail in Chapter Two) are the “prevailing systems of laws, practices, and relations among different properties” that determine who may be excluded from particular spaces and under what conditions (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). In Seattle, the MID serves as a facilitator of the contemporary property regime change. The MID is one of the largest drivers in the current reconstituting of public space by regulating how public spaces are perceived and who and what activities belong in these spaces downtown. MID programming ultimately serves a dual purpose through its regulatory mechanisms: it primes the downtown area earmarked for post-industrial consumptive purposes through the physical and ideological rehabilitation of urban spaces to align with a particular aesthetic and notion of citizenship and then acts as the gatekeeper of new “pseudo-private spaces” of the changing property regime in Seattle. The following section describes MID programming in more detail.

THE MID:

As discussed in Chapter Four, the MID was produced through the unification of three separate DSA-managed BIAs in the downtown in 1999 (see Chapter Four, pg. 81). The motivations behind the creation of the MID ultimately boil down to three main factors. First, interviewees commonly denoted waning municipal services as a major impetus for creating a “climate ripe” for BIA creation in Seattle (MID Interview B). Second, the interviewees additionally noted that BIA models permit “do it yourself” and neoliberal approaches to “revitalizing” downtown (MID Interviews A). In these systems, ratepayers have the ability to efficiently direct resources to address what they perceived to be issues in the downtown. For example, reflecting on the supplemental provision of services offered by the MID, one interviewee stated that these efforts have brought “the general level of order and cleanliness up” in the downtown area in a way “that it really wouldn’t have achieved or the city wouldn’t have been able to achieve” (MID Interview C). Third, and connected to the first two factors, the MID (and its earlier predecessors) would allow ratepayers to tackle public issues in the downtown, both real and perceived. Interviewees commonly connected public safety issues to the presence of homeless individuals, panhandlers, and the presence of open-drug markets. In particular, some interviewees noted the continued presence of homeless youth in the downtown in connection to public safety (MID Interview A). Describing the earlier public safety conditions that warranted BIA creation, the MID ratepayer commented:

“There were, and there still are in some cases, especially in the early days, groups of individuals, young males, some females, that would engage in some intimidating behaviors. If you were, in my experience, witnessing this or others telling you their stories, you would walk down the sidewalk and see

this group and they would be shouting obscenities or engaging menacingly. That is distinctly uncomfortable. So we were interested in making sure that that isn't the behavior that takes root on particular locations, corners, parks, or where ever it was and that we try to figure out what really happening. Who are these people? What do they need? Why are they doing this? And what can we do to make it a better experience. In a very practical matter, wherever their locations was [sic], whether it was near the [Pike Place] Market or near a shopping area, if you're a resident or an office worker or a visitor downtown, that's not a pleasant experience to have to run the gauntlet through a whole bunch of really bad behavior" (MID Interview A)

This comment illuminates once again that safety issues in the downtown largely had to do with perceptions of crime and anecdotal stories rather than actual upticks in crimes or assaults. Like the themes evident in the above quote, many other interviewees commented that public safety concerns in the downtown were - and still are - largely about a perceived lack of safety rather than actual criminality.

Within the interviews, many interviewees relied on anecdotal stories from visitors from outside the area who experienced a sense of a lack of safety. These sentiments are reinforced by media coverage and news articles discussing the conditions of downtown Seattle and MID functions that tout similar storylines drawn from largely anecdotal accounts of visitors feeling scared. For example, one article featured the quip that visiting friends "felt safer in the Chicago Loop" (Connelly 2010) than in downtown Seattle and another article relayed that visitors vowed to never return to Seattle due their daughter being frightened by "hordes of disgusting homeless people" (Jamieson 2007).

In addition to perceived threats, the quote by the MID representative above also highlights the MID's particular focus on regulating and managing homeless youth, which is something that has not been discussed in earlier research on BIAs.

The interviewee specifically marked youth as making the downtown appear dangerous and uncomfortable. Bringing this topic up again in the interview, the MID interviewee indicated that youth in the downtown continue to be problematic and one of the central focuses of the MID, stating:

“Then there are others, that we call *the youth*, and they can be homeless, runaways, they could be needing some assistance or, I mean obviously if they are homeless or runaways. They are the group that can take over part of a park or a corner or public space to the exclusion of anyone else and we’re trying to get our arms around that” (MID Interview A, emphasis added by author).

Likewise, media coverage on youth in the downtown follows a similar discourse. A *Seattle Times* article discussing the presence of “youth loiterers” in the Pike-Pine Corridor noted that these groups have created continual “headaches for police and merchants” (Ith 2001). The article stated that police “agree that there is more to be done to shoo away” youth and that they were requesting that judges add geographic bans on that area for youth offenders (Ith 2001).

The creation of an entity largely focused on addressing perceived safety suggests that these downtown areas are, in fact, being “sanitized” to generate conditions supportive of suburban shoppers and visitors. In line with other projects of reassurance, the intended purpose of these programs is to make the downtown area feel safer for middle-class visitors and residents by removing from the urban landscape low-income and homeless persons and the threat they represent in middle-class imaginations. In fact, the on-going perception of downtown Seattle as unsafe is an enduring and pervasive discourse, even as statistical evidence reveals that crime has been declining over the past few decades in the downtown (Brown 2012, Holden 2013, Burkhalter 2012). Tellingly illustrating this disconnect, in an

article about Seattle crime rates, King County Sheriff John Urquhart mentions that his wife would not get out of the car downtown due to Seattle streets being “scary” (Burkhalter 2013). By contrast, Seattle Police Chief Jim Pugel has repeatedly stated that crime in Seattle has in fact decreased over the past few decades, in spite of the prevalent discourse that suggests “every year, it’s never been worse, to some people” (Burkhalter 2013).

Within a context of declining crime statistics and the continued prevalence of perceived public safety issues downtown, the motivation for restrictive policies that target the homeless is called into question. If it’s not crime, then what animates such efforts? Urban scholars have made the connection between discourses about the city and neoliberal redevelopment programs that are designed to attract out-of-town shoppers and visitors (Brenner and Theodore 2005, Miraftab 2007, Gibson 2004, Ward 2007). These studies argue that the real impetus for increased public space management mechanism appears to be oriented around capital accumulation. That is, individuals or physical landscapes that make downtown appear “scary” are a threat to the affluent and middle classes and therefore need to be managed, cleaned up, or removed, regardless of a lack of crime. Ward (2007), for example, argues that BIAs are “involved in managing the emotional landscapes of the cities, remaking how citizens and visitors feel about, and relate to, the downtown” (785). The same can be said of BIA public safety mechanisms. To tackle the alleged public safety issues revealed in countless accounts of the downtown as a threatening space, the MID engages in a series of programs to control and manage public areas in downtown. The following sections describe these specific MID programs of the MID

and explores how they work to “restructure urban space to serve the ideal of a world class city integrated into the global economy, at the cost of the city’s social and spatial integration” (Miraftab 2007, 603). I argue that BIAs and BIA programming effectively act as “gates” to downtown. That is, much like gated communities, MID programming exists to provide an increased feeling of safety and protection, but in doing so, they also perpetuate unfounded urban fears. Low’s (2003) conclusions about gated communities are applicable here: BIAs also “produc[e] a landscape of fear by reinforcing perceptions, among both residents and outsiders, that only life inside a “fortress” and physical separation from people of other racial, cultural, and economic groups can keep one safe” (35).

With respect to policy transfer, interviewees commonly noted that they looked to east coast BIAs, in particular those found in Washington D.C., and New York City, for programming ideas. Still, while BIAs largely pursue a similar end game and look to other cities for programming input, the actual strategies employed by BIAs are localized and locally contingent. As such, BIA programs exhibit a degree of variety. The following section describes the various spatial and representational programs that the MID engages in to control and manage public spaces in downtown Seattle. I argue that BIAs’ regulatory mechanisms have now advanced beyond Clean and Safe Ambassador programs to include more complex, and municipally integrated, spatial and representational programs aimed ultimately at managing public spaces and regulating the actions and presence of “undesirables.” The degree of municipal partnership illuminates the continued blurring of private-public relations in contemporary urban governance and points to an evident

changing property regime in which public spaces are marked for capital consumption and as such, citizenship is extended primarily to consumers.

MID PROGRAMMING

MID Cleaning Ambassadors

Many BIAs offer Clean and Safe programming, which often involves supplementary sanitation and street cleaning programs, as well as some form of supplementary safety provision (Morcol and Zimmerman 2006). Likewise, the MID Clean and Safe program involves supplementary cleaning, hospitality, safety, and destination marketing and program coordinating services for downtown Seattle. While Clean and Safe programs are not the only BIA techniques of public space regulation, they remain central to the entire process as the nucleus, or genus, of all other BIA regulatory means. As revealed in many of the interviews and articles about BIAs, the late 1990s and into the 2000s was a period of time in which downtown Seattle was often discursively framed as crime ridden, lacking general safety, and physically dilapidated (MID Interview A, MID Interview C, Nogaki 1994). In general, the sentiment was that the streets and public spaces of Seattle were in dire need of being “saved,” often through efforts to “take back” the streets (Rivera 2000, Jamison 2007). Reflecting these themes, a common refrain in both my interviews and in local media coverage was that MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors were essential and necessary participants in the drive to “reclaim” Seattle’s streets from the rampant and pervasive disorder occurring in the downtown. For example, in one local article aptly entitled “Goodwill ambassadors create clean image for city,”

the MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors were described as fulcrum in “improving both the perception and reality of safety throughout downtown neighborhoods” in an effort to make Seattle “the safest, cleanest and most vibrant destination in the region to work, live, shop and be entertained” (Hill 1999). The MID Clean and Safety Ambassador program has been an integral facet of the MID since its inception. As noted earlier, the primary impetus for downtown BIA creation in Seattle was often centered on (largely perceived) safety concerns and as such, earlier downtown BIAs also relied heavily on Clean and Safe programming (City of Seattle 1988).

The logics of the MID Clean and Safe Ambassador program build from assumptions about crime and urban space made popular by Wilson and Kelling’s (1982) Broken Windows Theory, an order maintenance policing approach. Proponents of a broken windows approach argue that disorder in public spaces will lead to the withdrawal of “citizens,” which will ultimately result in increased crime and increased disorder, thereby setting off a vicious cycle that inevitably leads to the contagion of crime. The theory stipulates that if the disorder is quickly removed from the area, it will not fall prey to this circular downward debility. When asked to clarify why the MID was essential for the downtown, all respondents made statements affirming common tropes associated with broken windows theory. For example, one MID manager postulated:

“The whole approach to the BID is to you know, ‘if you clean it, it’ll be used and let the culprit or the bad people know that this area is being maintained and that people care about this area. Take your business elsewhere. That’s our motto and that’s what we’re trying to provide” (MID Interview A).

Regarding the same subject matter, another interviewee stressed:

“When you are in an area that seems dirty, it also seems unsafe. It seems like its unfriendly. So very small things like the smell of an alley or having a lot of litter strewn about on the sidewalk are sort of small things that make areas seem less watched, less cared for. And can often attract behaviors that sort of feeds on that” (MID Interview C).

Building from – if unconsciously – the logics of Broken Windows, these quotes reveal the MID’s desire to stem perceived decline through the appearance of “clean” urban spaces. Indeed, the purpose of the Clean and Safe ambassadors is often described as making “downtown Seattle safer, friendlier and cleaner” (McOmber 1999).

In line with this approach, MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors have three main functions within the downtown. First, MID Cleaning Ambassadors, consisting predominately of formally homeless individuals, are distributed throughout the city, providing sanitation services such as twice daily litter pick up, trash disposal, power washing, leaf control, public graffiti removal, other streetscaping functions, and human waste removal (MID Interview B, MID Interview C, MID website “MID Services,” Kim 2001). For this, MID Ambassadors are predominately recruited through a partnership with the Millionair Club. MID Clean Ambassadors are paid a wage that, while above minimum wage, is presumably well below the starting wage for a municipal maintenance or sanitation worker.⁷ While increasingly BIAs are touted as solutions to city park management, MID Cleaning Ambassadors are not allowed to work within municipal parks due to current labor issues with the City of

⁷According to Kim (2001) the MID Clean Ambassadors were paid between \$7 to \$7.50 an hour. The Seattle minimum wage during this period of time was \$6.72. While salary data for the City of Seattle in 2001 is not readily available, using present data for a City of Seattle Janitor 1 position in 2014 (\$19.75) and the minimum wage for 2001 and 2014, I calculated that a Janitor 1 position would be around \$14.24 in 2001. (Washington State Department of Labor and Industries “History of Washington Minimum Wage”). In 2005, a grounds maintenance worker for the Seattle Parks Department made (\$20.80) (<http://lbloom.net/xsea05.html>).

Seattle's Parks and Recreation Department (Hansen 2014, Reichl 1999, MID Interview D). Yet, as seen above with the Pike-Pine Renaissance, certain parties, such as the DSA and MID ratepayers, are increasingly calling for more private maintenance of municipal parks in Seattle. In fact, for the Pike-Pine Corridor planning project the DSA and MID hired Daniel Biederman, one of the founders of the Bryant Park Corporation (BPC), a forerunner in BIA public space regulatory mechanisms (For more see Reichl 1999, Madden 2010).

Image 4:

MID Cleaning Ambassador in the Pike-Pine Corridor



Photo source: Author

The primary function of the MID Cleaning Ambassadors is sustaining urban order through the clean up and environmental maintenance of downtown spaces and by doing so, reassuring visitors that the area is safe. Discussing why the MID

Cleaning Ambassadors were so important to Seattle, one MID manager stated, “if we were not down here, it would not be clean, that’s just the way it is...If we’re not here, is not going to happen” (MID Interview D). The interviewee went on to relay how MID Clean Ambassadors were essentially the vanguards of the city, keeping the criminal element at bay. Importantly, the MID Cleaning Ambassadors also collect copious data regarding physical maintenance issues, as well as data on so-called “quality-of-life concerns” such as public urination and defecation and panhandling. In terms of advancement within the BIA, MID Cleaning Ambassadors who demonstrate good skills interacting with people have the potential to transition onto the Safety Ambassador side of MID operations. The MID Safety Ambassador program is further explained in this chapter.

While the MID Cleaning Ambassadors do a lot of beneficiary sanitation services in the downtown, there are several concerns. First, MID Clean Ambassadors can be seen as facilitating the recasting of public services. While MID Clean Ambassadors have yet to move into maintaining downtown parks, the MID Cleaning Ambassadors provide services ubiquitously in public spaces within the downtown and have been described as allowing the city to “continue business as usual” in a time of “economic crisis” in which “the city has to pull back some of their resources” (MID Interview D). Secondly, following Harcourt (2009), the MID Clean Ambassadors’ function of removing disorderly elements from the downtown can be understood largely as a way to instill particular aesthetic preferences in public spaces at the cost of others’ needs. Thus, according to these order maintenance style approaches, “undesirables” instigating no harm are criminalized (Harcourt

2009). Importantly, the designation of “undesirable” is a socially constructed concept, and it has a palpable bias against low-income people of color. The focus on the built environment and clean spaces as a means to limit urban disorder and crime has been empirically discredited (Harcourt 2006) and diverts focus away from larger structural questions about socioeconomic inequality and racial segregation in the neoliberal city (Herbert and Brown 2006). Seattle’s “programs of reassurance” and the efforts of the MID must be situated within this context.

As noted above, the MID has been hiring formerly homeless individuals as members of the MID Clean and Safe Ambassador crew. Known as the Second Chance Program (SCP), like similar programs offered by BIAs throughout U.S., it was presented by interviewees and the local media as a means for the MID to magnanimously “give back and attract new residents and businesses interested in joining participatory, benevolent communities” (Lewis 2010, 191). For example, on the DSA website, testimonials praising the success of the program stated that the MID “gives dignity to those who have made mistakes in their past but now want to work” (DSA website, 2013 “MID Testimonials”). In order to facilitate the SCP, the MID partners with the Millionair Club Charity, a longstanding Seattle organization. The MID hires Millionair workers, individuals who were formerly homeless, incarcerated, or drug addicts, as MID Cleaning Ambassadors to do sanitation and maintenance work. The hiring of homeless has been a centerpiece of the MID since its inception and appears to be an extension of earlier DSA downtown BIA programming (City of Seattle 1988). In accordance with neoliberal logics, the SCP largely frames homelessness as a product of personal pathology – rather than a

reflection of labor markets or larger structural processes - in which the individual is solely responsible for his or her present situation (Sparks 2010). The MID homeless hiring constructs homeless individuals as in need of “benevolent aid” to successfully re-enter “into a homed norm” (Sparks 2010, 852). The DSA and MID ardently back the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County (for a critical over view of this program see Sparks, 2010).

Beyond its understanding and framing of the problem of homelessness, there are several other troubling facets to the SCP program. First, it diverts the provision of welfare (i.e. homeless services and job training) to the private sector and reinforces assumptions that the private sector is better suited for the delivery of such services (Lewis 2010). Using Millionair formulated metrics, the MID claims that each Millionair hired ultimately saves the city and taxpayers \$50,000. This framing – at once self-serving in that it reinforces the notion that the MID is saving the city money, rather than being subsidized by city investments - also suggests that the MID is more efficient in providing services than the local government. Second, the program has distinctively revanchist overtones. These crews remove and clean objects and areas that are being used for purposes other than consumption and by doing so truncate the ability of other individuals to partake in the oeuvre by limiting particular individuals’ ability to make space “as their heart desires” (Harvey 2003). In the past, MID collected data from Ambassadors on “quality-of-life” concerns was utilized to successfully lobby for the removal of public restrooms in the downtown and to physically close areas for overnight sleeping by gating areas and/or turning them into “art” exhibits (Interview C). In the SCP, former homeless individuals no

long disrupt the changing regime of public space; rather they act as ushers and guardians of the changing property regime and the projects of reassurance. While panhandlers on the streets are framed as “uncivil” and largely as frauds in mainstream media, MID Clean Ambassadors are depicted as amiable “polishers” of the urban core glitz (Hill 1999).

MID Safety Ambassadors

In contrast to the MID Clean Ambassadors, the MID Safety Ambassadors are involved in a more diverse set of functions. For example, they provide a “three hatted program” in the downtown (MID Interview B). Like the MID Cleaning Ambassadors, each of the three MID Safety Ambassador elements plays a significant role in facilitating projects of reassurance in Seattle. One of the three MID Safety Ambassadors’ functions is to serve as “goodwill ambassadors” for the city by providing hospitality and customer services for visitors, shoppers, and residents. One interviewee noted that a large part of this role is actually providing reassurance of safety for tourists and suburban shoppers (MID Interview B). The interviewee detailed that visitors to the city are generally concerned about safety and that MID Safety Ambassadors, in uniform and armed with radios, succor apprehensive visitors in addition to being able to answer other wayfaring and directional questions.

While the providing of hospitality services is a key role for MID Safety Ambassadors, as one MID representative stressed, “our strategies have shifted over the years...we’ve gone from heavy on hospitality to sort of bridging more of the

public safety” aspects (MID Interview C). Unlike MID Clean Ambassadors, MID Safety Ambassadors are allowed to operate in municipal parks downtown. According to the interviews with MID representatives, most public safety concerns stemmed from the presence of homeless individuals, panhandlers, and other individuals alleged to be engaged in open-drug markets. It is worth noting again that the preponderance of these public safety concerns were largely about perceived crime rather than actual crime. Illuminating this, one MID representative noted that:

“The average person doesn’t know a drug deal is going down, right. But that doesn’t necessarily affect the perception of it per se. If they see someone panhandling, or aggressively panhandling, that makes them feel uncomfortable. Or even loitering for that matter, but I don’t think Seattle has a law against loitering. So it’s more about perception, if people feel threatened or feel that their lives are in jeopardy they are going to link it to being a crime issue” (MID interview D).

One of the chief underlying purposes of the MID Safety Ambassador program is to quell concerns about downtown crime expressed by middle class and affluent visitors, shoppers, and residents. Yet, as this quote illuminates, often those invoking fear amongst these individuals are not actually engaged in criminal activities; rather, it is their mere presence that causes a sense of threat. Theories touting the containment of fear, such as broken windows theory, suggest that individuals or conditions that precipitate fear in “citizens” must be removed or else the endless cycles of crime will become firmly entrenched in an area. However, Harcourt (2002) points out the fundamental problems of such logic:

“The central claim of the broken windows theory—that disorder causes crime by signaling community breakdown—is flawed. The categories of “disorder” and “the disorderly” lie at the heart of the problem. Those categories do not have well-defined boundaries or settled meanings. When

we talk about "disorder," we are really referring to certain minor acts that some of us *come to view* as disorderly mostly because of the punitive strategies that we inflict as a society. We have come to identify certain acts—graffiti spraying, litter, panhandling, turnstile jumping, and prostitution—and not others—police brutality, accounting scams, and tax evasion—as disorderly and connected to broader patterns of serious crime. Hanging out on the front steps of a building or loitering with neighbors only signals that the community is not in control *if* hanging out or loitering is perceived as violating certain rules of conduct. But, of course, that depends on the neighborhood—and in some, in fact, it reflects strong community bonds and informal modes of social control... The broken windows theory has, in this sense, a self-reinforcing logic: it helps shape the perceptions, emotions, and judgments we form about people who are homeless, hustling, or panhandling. Still, the best social scientific evidence suggests that there are mixed signals associated with disorder—disorder does not correlate with crime in most tests. In sum, it is an illusion to believe that the order in order maintenance is necessary to combat crime (“A broken theory” para. 2).”

Harcourt’s analysis points to the fact that that “disorder” is a socially constructed concept that is fraught with assumptions about which groups and what activities are appropriate in which spaces. His argument illustrates how broken windows is a self-fulfilling prophecy in which maintenance order control serves as a pretense for the continued hegemonic privileging of particularly racialized and classed groups. In downtown Seattle, order is reserved to a very limited and narrow conception, i.e., middle class and affluent individuals and their activities of consumption. Conversely, homeless individuals and panhandlers are largely labeled as “disorderly” and therefore are not extended the same rights in public spaces.

The second and third functions of MID Safety Ambassadors involve engagement with homeless individuals, panhandlers, and other street populations. MID Safety Ambassadors provide some degree of social service outreach to homeless individuals. According to my interviews, it appears that this type of engagement typically occurs when homeless individuals are found to be violating

(or seem to be violating by MID calculations) one of the many municipal civility codes, such as the lie-sit ordinance and the ordinance aggressive panhandling).⁸ Thus, in terms of social service outreach, MID Safety Ambassadors provide “first line” outreach and some case management (MID Interview C). Of the three BIAs in Seattle that perform some degree of social services, the MID has the most expansive program and largest budget (See Table 5).

The logic for MID social programs is largely aligned once again with neoliberal principals. Increasingly, the state has become more reliant on MID social service programming in the downtown. In 2013, through the a new municipal program called the City Center Initiative (CCI), the MID was awarded a \$288,000 grant from the City of Seattle’s Human Services Department (HSD) to provide additional MID programing and staff focused on social services (MID Interview C, DSA website “MID Outreach”). This grant has allowed the MID to expand its Clean and Safe Ambassador fleet to include six full time outreach ambassadors doing “light case work management,” three full time outreach ambassadors “with a bit heavier” social service responsibilities, and one part-time licensed mental health professional who also works in conjunction with the Seattle Union Gospel Mission (MID Interview C). Discussing the outreach element of MID Safety Ambassadors, a MID representative emphasized that the major facets of MID case management entailed: welfare check-ins, identification card services, social service referrals, and relationship building capacities (MID Interview C). Again, MID social service programming largely facilitates the recasting of “social welfare as a private-sector

⁸See Chapter Three for more information on these municipal codes

responsibility” that is subsidized by the municipal government and largely expedites the erosion of confidence in government social service provider abilities (Lewis 2010).

Furthermore, social services provided by the MID can be largely understood as the private, revanchist enforcement of Seattle’s anti-homeless laws. In the interviews, one of the most common reasons for MID Ambassadors focusing on civility laws was described as a lack of follow-through on the part of the municipal government and SPD to enforce civility laws in the downtown. Explaining the significance of the MID, the OED representative suggested:

“I think whatever the reason, city policies about police presence and police action have a huge effect on the downtown neighborhoods, kind of the parks and public spaces. So for the DSA, who is really interested in promoting the downtown and tourism and just making it a welcoming place so that people will come here and shop and go to shows and everything, its really important for them, if the city policies are making it seem, if they feel like what we are doing is not making the place safe or comfortable for folks, then it is a big issue for them. And it’s been something that they have been really focused on and concerned about.” (OED Interview).

Two of the primary services of “light out reach” undertaken by the MID Safety Ambassadors are wake up calls in the morning and dealing with lie-sit incidents throughout the day (MID Interview C). While these calls can potentially provide individuals with critical assistance, the wake-up calls seem to fall more into the “get out of this space now” genre. In doing such, the MID essentially provides “benevolent” help administering ordinances that SPD generally does not enforce, for example, in 2009 SPD cited individuals under the lie-sit ordinance only 57 times (Knight 2010). Affirming this, one of the MID managers stated “we try and work with the police in an indirect partnership...to help enforce some of the city

ordinances, even though we have no enforcement capabilities” (MID Interview B).

In 2012, the MID Safety Ambassadors performed 7,079 public area sleeping morning-wake up calls, which pales in contrast to the 17 personal items kits distributed throughout the same time period (MID Business Plan 2013, 4).

Image 5:

MID Safety Ambassador performing a wake-up call



Photo source: Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Knight 2010), caption reads: “A safety ambassador with a nonprofit wakes up a homeless man and tells him to get up and move along. Photo: Mike Kane/Special To Seattlepi.com”

Perhaps most problematically, the quasi-enforcement of civility laws by MID Safety Ambassadors has little to no accountability measures in place. Under the program, MID Safety ambassadors report to a MID manager, and unlike the SPD, MID incident reports are not open to the public. For those outside of the MID, information on MID Safety Ambassadors actions are therefore largely anecdotal. Illuminating this, in a 1999 *Seattle Times* article discusses the interactions between

a MID Safety Ambassador and a homeless individual. According to the account, a MID Safety Ambassador witnessed a homeless man “soliciting too aggressively” and in response to these actions, the MID Safety Ambassador communicated to the homeless individual that “this isn’t the way to act” (Godden 1999). The homeless individual subsequently moved from the area. However, absent from this account was what exactly aggressive soliciting entails and to what extent this individual was engaging in this type of behavior. While MID Safety Ambassadors receive training from SPD about laws and engagement, MID Safety Ambassadors are largely left to make these decisions on their own volition with no public accountability mechanisms in place. In this case, the MID Safety Ambassador, a private citizen, had the increased ability to dictate what constitutes acceptable behaviors in public space.

Another way that MID Safety Ambassadors regulate public spaces in downtown is through the enforcement of lie-sit ordinances. While theoretically, again, MID Safety Ambassadors have no more legal power than the average citizen, they are the largest enforcers of the anti-homeless lie and sit ordinances. In 2012, MID ambassadors recorded 8,351 “sit and lie ordinance/pedestrian interference enforcement” (MID Business Plan 2013, 4). Additionally, the MID funded off duty police department patrols that recorded an additional 1,857 lie-sit cases. Discussing MID involvement with lie-sit laws, some interviewees declared that the MID Safety Ambassadors were not regulators of the lie-sit ordinances, while others essentially implied the opposite. What the interviewees did agree on was the method in which

they interacted with the homeless in cases of lie-sit infractions. One MID

interviewee described the interaction as:

“We can do light enforcement of some laws, so- not even light enforcement, its more of just kind of helping remind people that there are laws out there. One of them that we do the most on is sit and lie. If you have a whole side walk where people are sort of sitting down and obstructing the right of way, we’ll often go up and say, hey just so you know there is a sit and lie ordinance here, you’re legally not able to sit here for longer than X minutes, I’m not an officer but I’m letting you know that this is not legal, so I’m just asking you to leave, so please stand. That’s kind of the extent in which we can be enforcers if at all. But when we have say an off duty emphasis patrol on duty with us then they can help to provide back up and that helps to enforce some level of authority in the ambassadors.” (MID Interview C)

Even without the presence of SPD off-duty emphasis patrols, from other interviews

it is evident that the MID still consistently calls the SPD in these types of situations.

While interviewees commonly noted that in most cases the MID Safety Ambassadors

were able to get individuals up off of sidewalks, in the few cases in which they

cannot, MID Safety Ambassadors react by:

“Call SPD and say hey can you help us get this person up and then they show up and go through the same thing. Seattle, I don’t know if its national of what, but they’re under this consent decree through I don’t know if you can boil it down to one reason why they are but, use of force has been a big issue. We could talk for hours about that, but the fact is that they don’t show up and grab the guy by the scruff of the neck and pull him up and go, I don’t care where you go but you can’t stay here.” (MID Interview B)

While this quote suggests that the use of force to remove individuals from public

spaces is limited, the new partnership between the MID, SPD, and social service

providers allows the SPD and the MID to force individuals into choosing voluntary

social services or face arrest. The details of this new partnership will be described in

the following section.

City Center Initiative, MDT, and the MID Tracking

Building off the Clean and Safe Ambassador program, the MID and municipal partnership continues to develop in complexity. In 2013, business leaders and social service providers, groups usually working at cross purposes, “reached an unprecedented agreement” to support a new City of Seattle program called the City Center Initiative (CCI) (Porter, Business leaders advocate for CCI, Oct 13 2013 KiroTV.com). The fundamental aim of CCI is to “solve” public safety issues in downtown by increasing coordination between business leaders, service providers, and the municipal government “in a way that is smarter, more comprehensive, more strategic and more effective than past approaches” (City of Seattle 2013 “Chief of Police Report”). Through the CCI, the MID has been partnering with SPD, the Human Services Department (HSD), Park Rangers, and a series of social service providers, such as Seattle’s Union Gospel Mission and YouthCare, to design what has been dubbed the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). The Seattle municipal website described this group as “strategiz[ing] about addressing the needs and issues of individuals who have posed public order issues, with an initial focus on Westlake and Occidental Parks” (City of Seattle 2013 “Chief of Police Report”).

The MDT program took “cues from cities like L.A., San Diego and Philadelphia” (Driscoll 2013). Notably, Los Angeles and San Diego are fairly consistent perennials on the National Top 10 Meanest Streets List according to the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (Driscoll 2013, www.nationalhomeless.org, Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). The program is part and parcel of the larger Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program (LEAD), a pilot program that has been in operation in the Belltown neighborhood since 2011.

The goal of the LEAD program is to provide avenues other than jail for civility and minor drug-related infractions. Under the LEAD program, in lieu of jail time, individuals serve community service time through the Seattle Community Court (SCC) after which they are monitored by a case manager from a social service provider (City of Seattle 2014, "Update on CCI"). The purpose of the MDT is to "prep" for eventual expansion of the LEAD program throughout the entire downtown area (City of Seattle, 2014 "Update on CCI").

With funding from HSD, as an integral part of the MDT, the MID is responsible for data collection and reporting, first line outreach and "triage," providing community service opportunities, and some degree of case management (MID Interview C). For the MDT, the MID Safety Ambassadors act as the primary (and seemingly only) data collectors. Regarding data collection and reporting, the MID tracks and reports civil infractions "and challenging behaviors" within the downtown. These "challenging behaviors" remain largely undefined on MID and City of Seattle materials (City of Seattle 2014 "CCI-MDT Policies"). Through this data, the MID is to then identify potential MDT candidates using the following indicators:

- Frequent interactions and/or citations with SPD
- Violation of Parks rules/codes of conduct/exclusions
- Vulnerability due to intoxication
- Vulnerability due to psychosis
- Sitting or lying on sidewalks
- Violent outbursts/aggressive outbursts
- Impacts/complaints from business owners, residents and visitors
- Frequent interactions with outreach staff
(City of Seattle 2014 "CCI- MDT Policies")

Referring to this program, one MID manager stated, “we try to take a case management intensive approach and sort of see and feel out anchors in some of the downtown areas that are hardest hit by, or at least seem to cause the most apprehension amounts to visitors and residents, so that would be Westlake Park, that would be Occidental Park” (MID Interview C). Once again, the mere apprehension amongst visitors and residents merits increased order maintenance through detailed tracking and data collection of homeless individuals. So while this program is aimed to tackle Seattle’s “crime problem,” it appears as if the essence of the program is really to truncate the already limited autonomy of homeless individuals in public spaces in the name of deterring crime. Evident in the quote above, the purpose of the program is to relieve apprehension by removing individuals who are seen to pose a threat.

Furthermore, MID data collection through the MDT raises a series of important questions, particularly with respect to accountability. While ultimately the municipal government and the mayor have oversight of the MDT, again, the MID is not open to the same degree of public scrutiny as are traditional publically funded entities. In illustration of this point, the MID has always tracked homeless individuals and panhandlers in the downtown to some degree. In a much earlier incident, when *The Stranger*, a Seattle-based alternative news outlet, requested to see MID Clean and Safety Ambassadors incident reports, it was denied by a former MID director, who cited that access to such documents would be “too disruptive to our operations” (Kearny 2000). Ten years later, *The Stranger* eventually did obtain a copy of a MID data collecting spreadsheet to find it had detailed information listing

the location of homeless individuals who had refused social services, descriptions of their behaviors, their appearances, their ages, their physical disabilities, their patterns, and “speculation about their mental-health problems” (Holden 2010, para. 34).⁹Ultimately, the purpose of collecting this particular kind of data has to be called into question. In interviews, MID members stated that they used this data to respond better to trends in the downtown; the data allowed them to allocate resources responsively, such as MID Safety and Cleaning Ambassadors. (MID Interview C). Yet, “responding to trends” of homeless individuals largely appears to be a convention for more efficient ways to further regulate and control the presence of homeless individuals downtown. For example, this information could easily be utilized to augment MID-led enforcement of lie-sit and panhandling laws to an extent they had not been before.

Furthermore, through the MDT, the MID is currently in the initial stages of developing a much more sophisticated data tracking system, described by MID interviewees as a “public service realm tool” (MID Interview C). This new tool will allow MID ambassadors, and perhaps eventually ratepayers through smartphones, to map and report trends in the downtown. Through this new tool, according to interviewees, the MID plans to hold the municipal government more accountable to addressing issues and advocate for funding and resources to achieve solutions to issues the MID believes to befall the downtown (MID Interview C). While the tool is initially going to be used for downtown maintenance issues by MID Cleaning Ambassadors, interviewees discussed how the MID would, in the long run,

⁹See Appendix 2 for a copy of the spreadsheet made by *The Stranger* from MID data (Holden 2012).

eventually like to utilize this mapping tool for “public safety” tracking as well as “to understand trends in the downtown area for aggressive panhandling and for a lot of things that we talked about earlier” i.e., other “quality-of-life” and civility issues (MID Interview C). In light of these features, this program essentially replicates data-driven policing methods for utilization by private policing entities. Data-driven policing is a method of mapping “hotspots” of criminal activity and redeploying resources, in particular officers, to these areas. Kochel (2011) critically highlighted that these types of policing mechanisms might “potentially disproportionately impact...disadvantaged community members.” Correspondingly, the same critique should be extended to MID data-driven mechanisms, as they are essentially being designed to further track the activities of disadvantaged individuals, especially the homeless, in public space.

Revealing further connections to data-driven models, MID interviewees commonly demarcated several “hotspot” areas throughout the city into which they redirect more MID resources. In interviews, the most commonly mentioned “hotspots” were Westlake Park and the Pike-Pine Corridor and Occidental Park in Pioneer Square. In discussion of MID-constructed hotspots, one interviewee stated:

“I think that the greatest issues are some of the hotspots. So, geographic corridors or nodes where a lot of the cleanliness, well cleanliness comes into it, but a lot of issues like what I was taking about before, collide with out-of-towners, not just out-of-towners...Westlake is a hotspot. Occidental Square is a hotspot, a lot of Pioneer Square but really that area in particular.” (MID Interview C)

When describing the actions the MID engages in within these hotspots, one interviewee stated that they send additional MID Safety Ambassadors to the area to try “to build relationships, build trust with folks” in an effort to ultimately direct

these individuals off the street by connecting them to social service providers with brick and mortar facilities. Additionally, in these hotspots, the MID allocates elevated off duty SPD presence. In the future, the MID hopes to expand the number of full time SPD positions in these areas “to try and come at (hotspots) from a law enforcement perspective” (MID Interview B). MID funding of SPD officers allows the group to almost unilaterally direct police force focus in downtown to issues the MID wants challenged and enforced. Again, MID-perceived challenges are most often order maintenance and so-called quality-of-life concerns, such as lie-sit and panhandling attention (MID interviews A-D). As such, increased MID-funded SPD patrols appear to be another way in which the MID can control and regulate public spaces in downtown Seattle. Interestingly, as noted before, the three primary MID identified “hotspot” areas are Westlake Park, the Pike-Pine Corridor, and Occidental Park. These “hotspots” have public spaces within close geographic proximity to recent large-scale private and or semi-public redevelopments, impending redevelopments plans (See Chapter Three, Table 2). Given these geographic correlations, MID programs can be largely seen as the safeguards and primers of the changing property regime in Seattle (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006).

Undeniably, the DSA has shown its willingness and capacity to lobby city hall, backed by MID collected data. Several interviewees from the MID, as well as the OED representative, noted that MID data is often used to “lobby” and “leverage” resources from the city government. As an illustration of this, in an editorial a former DSA president declared that the DSA and MID have “been successful in advocating for increased police resources; changing the court system to focus on

frequent offenders; improving supervision of a parolees and supporting the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County” (Joncas 2006). In addition to being fervent backers of the earlier 1990s anti-homeless laws, the DSA whole-heartedly backed the more recent Tim Burgess-led Panhandling Laws in 2010. Under this law, aggressive panhandling would have an additional \$50 ticket and the incident would have been a civil infraction under which offenders would be *required* to perform community service hours and undergo treatment for drug or mental abuse problems. The MID partakes in court ordered community service programs, having recorded over 3000 plus hours in 2013 (MID Business Plan 2013, 9). Thus, this new law would have seemingly provided double value for the DSA and MID by first establishing more stringent panhandling laws and second, ensuring more labor hours for MID programming to pursue its projects of reassurance. Like the MID homeless hiring program, illuminating revanchist tactics, this law would have essentially forcibly made homeless individuals and panhandlers partake in the active sanitation and remaking of downtown public spaces and by doing so, participate in the production of the conditions conducive to further exclusionary practices. While the bill was ultimately vetoed by then Mayor Mike McGinn, it did not mark the end of the additional anti-homeless tactics in Seattle by elites and business interests.

MID Sponsored Police Emphasis

Over the years, the relationship between the MID and SPD has evolved, as evidenced by the creation of the MDT and the way in which the MID funds

supplemental SPD presence in the downtown. The MID-funded provision of sworn officers in downtown serves as yet another way to regulate and redefine public spaces downtown. Since its early days, the MID has committed funds, in the form of grants, to add additional off-duty SPD officer to the downtown. MID funding of off-duty SPD officers has continually increased; in 2014 the number doubled from \$150,000 to \$300,000. While the Chinatown-International District BIA also supplements police patrols in its district, the MID budget on supplemental SPD provision is greater than the entirety of the Chinatown-International District BIA's budget. In total, in 2012, MID off duty SPD funding ultimately equated to an additional 552 hours of SPD patrol in the downtown per month (MID Business Plan 2013). According to the MID Business Plan, this augmented police force focused primarily on "neighborhood hotspots including open air drug markets, illegal behaviors and bar times" (MID Business Plan 2013).

The hiring of off-duty officers by the MID in the downtown once again marks a fundamental redefinition of the state, as these police officers are now "hired providers" rather than "public caretakers" (Lewis 2010, 198). SPD appears to be highly permissive of this tactic; one police captain affirmed that MID funding of SPD officers allows "both formal and informal guardians of public safety" to work "to leverage out resources for a healthy and vibrant urban core" (MID website). Currently, this already lucrative partnership for both sides is on the verge of changing substantially. Commenting on this, one MID manager noted that:

"What we're transitioning to, instead of buying off-duty police time, we're going to try to fund four or five [officers]. So the commitment, the dollar amount will be more and then these this. Police officers will basically be an FTE increase into the Western Precincts, the downtown precincts. The

difference will be that we'll have them more times per month. It'll be a smaller pool of officers; it'll be the same four or five officers. So the situation that I just described about that guy up on the corner, they're going to be dealing with that same guy all day everyday throughout the week, as we will be. And so, we're hoping that through that and their involvement with the Multi-Disciplinary Team, we're hoping through that that they can paint a stronger picture, or maybe stronger isn't the right word—maybe clearer picture, to get individuals to access service through the old carrot and the stick approach. There isn't a whole lot of stick out there right now, it's all carrot" (MID Interview B).

The last sentence of this quote is perhaps the most telling. The MID representative essentially suggests that, to date, dealing with individuals on the street has been primarily in the form of welfare. Highlighting this, the interviewee continued to state that voluntary treatment programs were largely ineffective because participants could checkout and leave social service programs whenever they desired. In partnership with SPD, the MID hopes that, through the MDT, more "stick" is involved. For the MID representative, the "stick" means:

"We're hoping that the involvement of those officers in a more frequent opportunity with these folks can paint a clearer picture of the need that they have in the street and when it comes down to them voluntarily denying services that there can be a "hey listen, if you don't take this opportunity to plug into this treatment program, we're going to execute these warrants we have for your five failure to appears." So we try to have a little bit of leverage with folks that are unwilling to break that cycle." (MID Interview B)

As such, it appears that the MID, in tandem with SPD and backed by the support of the District Attorney, is attempting to roll out a program of compulsory social services that ultimately sounds like, as the MID representative stated "you can't stay here, you need to find another place to go" (MID Interview B). While this program certainly has beneficial elements such as connecting individuals with social services, it effectively truncates the agency and freedom of homeless individuals.

Yet another way in which the MID and police collaborate is through two MID-funded and operated storefront stations. The MID stations provide office spaces and equipment to SPD officers and MID Clean and Safe Ambassadors. The offices also allow for the rapid transferring of data and information from the MID to the SPD, and vice versa. The two stations, not surprisingly, fitting with MID-identified hotspots, are located within the Pike-Pine Corridor and Pioneer Square. Describing these stations, a former MID director stressed that the increased collaboration of SPD and MID Safety Ambassadors was to “associate with the [criminal’s] mind that the police and MID ambassadors are in close contact” (Kearny 2000).

In addition to police presence, the MID is also connected to the punitive side of civility policing. For the past eight years, the MID has partnered with the Seattle Community Court (SCC), which functions akin to programs operated by BIAs in New York City (Reichl 1999). Created in 2005 to address “quality-of-life” offenses in the downtown, SCC permits offenders of misdemeanor civility infractions, in lieu of serving jail sentences, the option to complete community service hours with twenty-five partnering “community programs” (“Seattle Community Court” 2014). One article favorable to the court program touted that “instead of entering jail, and essential ‘checking out’ of society for a few days, violators will be sentenced to community service—in the very spots where their infractions occurred” (Thomas 2005, para. 10). Further describing the program, a DSA vice president stated that the Community Court and MID partnership was a way for offenders of civility laws “to reintroduce themselves into the work environment” (Thomas 2005, para. 15). Community Court Participants work with MID Clean Ambassadors and perform

tasks such as cleaning, sanitation, pressure washing, and graffiti removal. In 2010, over 272 Community Court participants worked over 3400 hours for the MID (Seattle.gov 2011 “Seattle Community Court News”). Additionally, the MID utilizes security cameras to keep constant surveillance of some streets to safeguard that “acceptable” behaviors are occurring within the area. Thus, it would appear that public spaces in Seattle are increasingly privatized as they are constantly under the watchful eye of the MID through ambassadors and security systems. As result, downtown public spaces are increasingly becoming harder to access and navigate by marginalized communities, especially the homeless.

Give Smart Campaign

The now defunct Give Smart Campaign was another MID program in line with neoliberal principals to control public spaces in Seattle. The MID and DSA created, managed, and marketed the Give Smart campaign. While the program is no longer in operation, it was a stalwart of MID programming for years, drawing inspiration from a similar program in an earlier downtown DSA-managed BIA (City of Seattle 1988). According to the campaign’s website, the program was “a public outreach campaign to educate Downtown Seattle residents, employees and visitors about the issue of panhandling” (“Have a Heart” 2007). The program encouraged people to donate to the campaign rather than give money to panhandlers on the street. The Give Smart Campaign stressed that panhandlers often mismanaged money received through poor individual choices or were not truly in need of financial assistance to begin with (“Have a Heart” 2007). The program directed

charitable donations to services that according to the website would “more effectively” deal with homelessness and “offer real life change to people in need” (“Have a Heart” 2007). In a meeting of the MID’s Clean and Safe Downtown committee, all members “agreed that reducing the amount given to panhandlers is a positive goal” as it will ultimately “reduce the number of panhandlers in the highest pedestrian count areas” (DSA “Committee and Meeting Notes”). From this, it would appear that the Give Smart program is less altruistic and more about the bottom-line for downtown businesses and property owners in their pursuit to remove panhandlers. This program, once again, ultimately truncated the agency of homeless individuals and panhandlers. The Give Smart Campaign is now defunct largely due to the substantial operating costs required for the program (MID Interviews C).

“Positive Activation” in Public Spaces

In addition to physical regulatory mechanisms and civility law enforcement, the MID also engages in a series of representational and material programs to “influence the symbolic dimension of what the city is and whom it’s made” (Marquardt and Fuller 2011, 1). The MID and DSA are currently active in a number of “character” building programs or as the Bryant Park Company consultant David Biederman calls them “knots of activity” (Bhatt, 2014). The ultimate goal of these MID sponsored and facilitated “knots of activity” are to create “a thick schedule of public events,” imitating Bryant Park in New York City, where activities brought in “enough non-homeless people to vastly outnumber homeless people in the park, at a

ratio as large as 800 to 1” (Bhatt 2014). According to the interviewees and my own unobtrusive field research, MID “Positive Activation” programming covered a gamut of activities, from a concert series in the summer, marketing campaigns, holiday programming, engagement activities like yoga, dancing, and the Market-to-Market Scramble, and physical additions to municipal park spaces, such as adding Ping-Pong tables and children play spaces. Interviewees mentioned Biederman and the Bryant Park Corporation as muses in regards to instigating these projects. The goal of MID Positive Activations as one MID interviewee described, were to continue “to the make the downtown a destination place that people want to come to and feel safe” through “unique and entrepreneurial approaches” (MID Interview B).

Westlake Park, a MID identified “hotspot,” is one of the largest beneficiaries of MID Positive Activation programming. For Westlake Park, the DSA recently kicked off a \$150,000 two-year pilot program to increase park “activation” (Thompson 2014). As part of this, MID programming in Westlake Park now includes new furniture, yoga classes, games and tournaments, dancing programs, concert series, food vendors, a children’s play area, holiday programs, and in the future they hope to add “a small beer garden or café, à la Bryant Park” (Thompson 2014, Hansen 2014). Not surprisingly, there has been a long-standing and contentious history over the control and purpose of the Westlake Park, which has led one commentator to aptly describe the area as, “Seattle’s battleground, the Flanders field where *demos* and *plutos*, people and wealth, populist and elite forces have fought for domination” (Scigliano 2011).¹⁰ As part and parcel of this ongoing

¹⁰ See Gibson (2004) for a more nuanced study on the redevelopment of the Westlake area.

battle, one of the more recent MID-sponsored Positive Activations has been the development of a children's play area and the placement of Ping-Pong tables and other street furniture within the park. Interviewees noted that the DSA and MID elected to build the park as:

“We did not want to go through the city to build that. We wanted to have a better process. Have it be a little more reflective of the neighbors and what the rate-payers wanted. So we used that money, we had a good partnership with parks. They wanted us to do it so that it wouldn't have to go through their predetermined system and all of that. We currently are actually doing a lot more, we being the MID, with MID funding. We have two Ping-Pong tables out, we have a bunch of tables and chairs that we purchased, we're programming (Westlake) Park. We are partnering with the Alliance at Pioneer Square and Parks to help them do similar things down in Occidental Park. But Westlake is really where we are focusing a lot of our activation” (MID Interview C).

Through “Positive Activations,” the MID is remaking public spaces in downtown with little to no input from those beyond their own ratepayers. The municipal government, as seen above, is once again highly permissive of the MID's projects, essentially supporting, if not prodding, the MID to go around traditional and slightly more accountable municipal planning processes. Ultimately, these Positive Activations are part of the MID's larger efforts to (re)shape the conception of the downtown, particularly with the intention of attracting gentrifiers and controlling the spaces in which “undesirables” can move, operate, and subside. Thus, Positive Activations are part of the neoliberal program to truncate public programming and policy input, making urban spaces increasingly less democratic.

In describing the new children's play area, news agencies and MID personnel largely framed the project as a means to keep “menacing folks,” such as “skateboarders and loiters,” at bay ,and by doing so, the area will be less “appealing

for the negative activity” (Brill 2013). The purpose of this MID Positive Activation program appears to be aimed, once again, particularly at homeless youth who typically hang out in Westlake Park (Brill 2013). It is evident from this statement that MID Positive Activations are yet another articulation of control mechanisms that largely align with the Broken Windows philosophy. MID Positive Activation Programs in Westlake Park not only limit and deter use of the park by homeless individuals but also truncate the park’s ability to serve other large-scale democratic functions, such as rallies and protests. While the child’s playground was framed as a way to engender “diversity” by “attracting and retaining families” the program is essentially in line with what Lees (2003) describes as the “ambivalence of diversity,” the paradoxical promotion of diversity while “promoting forms of conspicuous consumption and social control that limits diversity” (614) (Kiro7 2013).

The children’s park, as well as the Ping-Pong tables and other furniture, restricts the diversity of actions that can now occur in Westlake Park. Over the years, Westlake Park has solidified into one of the premier protest spots in Seattle, with groups as divergent as the Occupy Wall Street movement to the Tea Party using the public space for demonstrations. Yet, as *The Stranger* emphasized, it is hard to have an occupy movement if the park is already “occupied by a children’s playground” and that as such, the playground is “a transparent ploy to eliminate the democratic protests and the messy sight of homelessness from Seattle’s main public plaza” (Goldy 2012). Thus, ultimately, the MID and its Positive Activations” serve as an additional chapter in the long running history of business and property owners (re)defining how the “downtown should appear and be experienced” and “who

should be there, and who should not” (Isenberg 2001, 11). Further study of MID representational programs should be undertaken; in particular additional research should be pursued focused on MID marketing and advertisements projects.

Image 6:

Westlake Park, Children’s Playground and Furniture (left)



Photo source: Author

Conclusion

(On MID Clean and Safety Ambassadors) “If Microsoft hired their own police force to roam the street, don’t you think people might be a little concerned?” *Real Change* editor Adam Holdorf (Kearney 2000)

“We have to be very intentional managing urban parks” Vice-president of the DSA (Thompson 2014)

“You can’t hold a neighborhood hostage to solve homelessness” (Former DSA president, Knight 2010)

In the past few decades, the nature of public space has greatly transformed. Under neoliberal programs public space has been increasingly closed, truncated, and privatized. Contemporary transformation of public space can largely be traced to the “behest of state and corporate strategies” (Low and Smith 2006). These transformations are corollaries of wider social restructuring, bourgeoisie insecurities, the increased inequalities and bipolarity of urban spaces, and the continued advancement of rebuilding the city for “the mobilization of the spectacle” (Harvey 1987, 1989, Low and Smith 2006, Gibson 2004). The contemporary *modus operandi* of post-industrial redevelopment is deeply connected with the establishment of BIAs. Since their inception in the 1960s, BIAs have been utilized in the (re)development of downtown districts, inner city neighborhoods, auxiliary commercial districts, and even suburban areas. Established and institutionalized as a prominent economic revitalization tool in the United States and Canada, BIAs have recently been adopted and adapted internationally as well. With little evidence that BIA activities and formation are likely to decrease in the upcoming years (rather quite the contrary), it is evident that they are increasingly important players within the urban environment and therefore demand additional academic attention.

While often considered a liberal and progressive city, Seattle possesses some of the oldest, most extensive, and most punitive anti-homeless laws in the county, and as such, the city is recognized as “a leader in techniques of spatial exclusion” (Herbert 2011, 95, Mitchell 2003). Adding to this legacy, MID programming and its “innovative partnerships” are examples of vanguard techniques of spatial exclusion in the highly polarized, post-industrial city. During an interview, a MID representative commented that the MID was not a politically active group like its managing entity the DSA, but rather that the MID only served as an operations group that “you’ve probably seen walking around the city doing cleaning, doing work with homeless populations, with tourists and visitors, providing wayfaring and customer service” (MID Interview D). Yet, fundamentally as this thesis has argued, controlling public space is absolutely political as the reproduction of space is ultimately a method of social control (Lefebvre 1991). The primary objective of MID programming appears to be making spaces amenable to capital by removing “undesirables” from public spaces in the downtown through the stringent, private and public enforcement of local Seattle anti-homeless laws and programs that limit agency and mobility of homeless individuals, as well as demonstrators, in public spaces.

Thus, the MID’s programming ultimately exacerbates and constrains negotiations of public space and citizenship by legitimizing and reinventing urban landscapes for a selective proportion of society, i.e., the middle class and wealthy consumers, tourists, and the global business class. While one of the stated goals of the MID is to “mak[e] Downtown Seattle a clean, safe, and welcoming place for

everyone” it is evident that everyone does not mean everyone (MID Business Plan 2013, 2). Community is often conflated with the desires of one group, leaving other groups largely silenced (Young 1986). The organizational structure of BIAs largely leaves out representation from members other than the business and propertied elite. Revealing their actual intended target a bit more, the MID states that its goal is to make the downtown a “safe and exciting place to live, work, shop, and play,” or in other words, an economic landscape to be consumed by consumers (MID Business Plan 2013, 2). Much of this goal is pursued through revanchist and broken window tactics to socially sanitize urban spaces for the hyper-consumptive, global business elite. Furthermore, these programs also truncate democratic processes, such as demonstrations, rallies, and parades. In the future, the potential spill over effects of these services should be studied in further detail. With the augmenting harassment by MID Ambassadors and police, it is likely that some homeless will simply respond by moving out of the downtown into areas “where property owners cannot afford to purchase” the same degree of “services” (Miraftab 2007, 611).

One of the principal goals of the “mobilizing the spectacle” program is to entice affluent residents and visitors to live and/or shop in the downtown and as such, gentrification of inner city neighborhoods is herald as a fantastic economic remedy for the post-industrial city. Yet, while cities continue to develop mechanisms to rid the city of the homeless to herald in further gentrification, gentrifying conditions ultimately facilitate the growth of homeless populations in these very same areas (Herbert 2011, 96). In Seattle, gentrification in the inner city has led to the continual loss of cheap single-room occupancy housing and other

affordable housing options (Herbert 2011, 96). This trend is increasingly true in neighborhoods with high concentrations of social service providers, such as the rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods of Pioneer Square and Belltown. In addition to this loss, many social service providers are also feeling the pressure of rising realty prices and are subsequently being forced out of downtown neighborhoods (Gibson 2004). The loss of single housing and social service entities largely leaves homeless individuals with fewer alternatives other than to be highly visible in public spaces at the same time private and public control mechanisms are trying to remove these individuals from these very same spaces (Herbert 2011).

In Seattle, as well as many other urban areas, for the foreseeable future these problems will only increasingly be exacerbated. Illustrating the rising anti-homeless sentiments in Seattle, even with increased regulator mechanisms, many business and property owners remain unsatisfied with the continued presence of homeless populations downtown. In a recent *Seattle Weekly* article, business owner (and therefore BIA ratepayer) Shari Druckman-Roberts, a proponent of former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani's hardline tactics, stated:

"These people should not be in the street. They should not be allowed to sleep in the street. They should not be allowed to be out in public with mental disorders, if they have them, or if they're drug addicts, they need to go away. People like us are going to get angrier and angrier, and without proper police support, we're going to start taking things in our own hands. Which means people are going to get hosed down...I'm against a lot of the entitlements that enable people to remain victims. That's what the problem is. Everyone wants to do good, but they're not doing good. They're not helping anybody. Seattle's allowing people to sleep and defecate and God knows what else in the streets. It's humiliation for both sides" (Driscoll 2013).

Given these sentiments, it is evident that the longstanding local contentions between business elites and homeless populations continue to brew in Seattle, and therefore warrant additional and vigilant academic attention. Adding to this ferment, the City of Seattle recently hired a new police chief, Kathleen O'Toole, a self-described ardent adherer of the broken windows method (Thompson 2014). Additionally, members of the DSA continue to push for increased private management of public spaces in the downtown, particularly downtown parks (Hansen 2014). Given these conditions, the way in which the MID and its programming evolves over the next few years should be watched and further studied.

Along the same lines, additional BIA academic attention is also warranted. Overall, I contend that the limited scope, scale, and short periods of time in which BIAs have been studied is not sufficient and does not fully recognize the underlying processes behind or fully document the extent in which BIAs are increasingly interconnected to local governance schemes. Future BIA research should include additional analysis of BIA involvement in local governance schemes; variation of methodological approaches; more longitudinal research; more empirical studies on the effects of BIAs, and finally, use different theoretical approaches to examine BIAs. I argue that studies need to move beyond describing organizational features of BIAs to include more research on implications of BIAs within urban governance, discursive practices of BIAs, and questions of spatial regulation. Using the recommendations delineated above would further enrich the subject matter as a whole.

Largely missing from this literature are critical theories and empirical studies that document the measurable economic impact of BIAs. As remarked by one researcher, “BIDs have been in place long enough to produce measurable outcomes” (Meltzer, 2011 511). Although it is impossible to fully understand the implications of policies and the extent of equitability, there are a range of options for future studies. First, while my study devolved into BIA discourse, limited attention has been paid to BIA discourse overall and its effects on the urban landscape. Thus, this topic should continue to be investigated. In particular, examination of BIA discursive practices and the intended benefactors of BIA programming should be pursued as they are more nuanced than the present literature conveys. Second, little attention is paid to the affects of BIAs throughout time as the majority of the case studies provide analysis of relatively short periods of investigation. Additional longitudinal and cross-sectional studies would provide enriching data that could illuminate the affects of BIAs over time. Fourth, little attention has been paid to BIAs in west-coast cities, as well as second-and third tier cities overall. While my research covers this gap there is room for additional studies, in particular, I urge that more research should be undertaken on cities like Oakland, San Francisco, Portland, and Vancouver, B.C. Likewise, little attention has been paid to Neighborhood Business Improvement Districts, NBIDs. Fifth, in effort to increase the depth and breath of the research done on cities, the field needs to move beyond case studies and apply different methodological approaches to advance more systematic theories on BIAs that take into account local, national, and global influences. Sixth, further studies linking class and race with BIAs and the

management of public spaces and the perception of fear should be pursued. In the end, in addition to more research, what is needed is further and meaningful discourse between policy makers, BIAs, and marginalized communities.

In closing, my findings illustrate the complex nature and extent that MID programming serves as a regulatory mechanism utilized throughout public spaces in the downtown. In particular, MID regulatory programming is utilized in public spaces within close geographic proximity to recent or forthcoming large-scale public, semi-public, and private redevelopments. As such, the MID can be seen as a primers and then as a gatekeeper of the changing property regime in downtown. The MID preps and then secures downtown spaces for capitalist projects by facilitating the transition of public spaces in downtown to “pseudo-private spaces” (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). Importantly as detailed in this thesis, MID programs differ, in part, to BIA programming previously described by Mitchell and Staeheli (2006) and Marquardt and Fuller (2012). Detailing the differences and complexities in BIA programming in various cities illuminates that like other neoliberal projects BIAs are never “brute impositions” but rather are shaped and influenced by localized contexts and contingencies (Wilson 2004). BIA programming and discourse in Seattle reflects local histories, understandings, and power structures. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, detailing and cataloguing differences in BIA regulatory mechanisms in various municipalities provides useful information for the documentation of – and potential responses to - the neoliberalization of urban space. As Low and Smith (2006) stress “whatever the deadening weight or heightened repression and control over public space, spontaneous and organized

political response always carries within it the capability of remaking and retaking public space and the public sphere” (16). Therefore, having expansive knowledge on neoliberal programs and articulations is a vital component to understanding how to respond to them and their subsequent geographically contingent mutations.

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Appendix A:

IRB Approved Research Questions for BIA Representatives

1. How did you come to work for this organization?
2. What were some of the major motivations behind the creation and continued existence of this organization?
3. How would you describe your organization's relation to the city of Seattle?
4. What benefits do you think your organization brings to the city of Seattle?
5. What do you think are some of the greatest issues with the downtown area currently?
6. What are some of the major issues your organization addresses in the downtown?
7. What were some of the major motivations behind the creation and continued existence of BIAs in Seattle?
8. Can you describe the goals and activities of your organization's programming?

Appendix B:

The Stranger created this graph through MID Ambassador data (Holden 2010).

AN EXCERPT FROM THE DSA'S SPREADSHEET TRACKING THE PERSONAL LIVES OF PANHANDLERS

The full spreadsheet also includes information about whether they have pets, what days of the week they've been spotted, and other details.

Description	Age	Sex	Aggressive	Homeless?
Wht, grey hair, uses cane. Carries sign that says "Help me" ... Possible mental illness.	55+	M	No	Unsure
Otis. African American... Uses 24-can size cardboard carton to panhandle with... [DSA's] Kate Joncas has seen him on numerous occasion[s]... Flirts with the girls as they walk by.	40s	M	No	Buses in from North Seattle—housed
Vash... Black hair, beard, boots with lots of laces . Sleeps on 5th Ave near Virginia... Verbally abusive.	21–30	M	Yes	Yes
Courtney, chubby wht female , blk & white striped socks... Olive to Pine on 5th.	21–26	F	No	Unsure
Hispanic, wheel chair, missing leg , light-colored jacket, blk short hair.	40+	F	No	Unsure