Is A Main Street Program Appropriate for Mattapan?

An Analysis of the Key Factors

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ABSTRACT
The Mattapan Community Development Corporation commissioned this report in an effort to obtain recommendations for a future Main Street program in Mattapan. The report begins by providing background information on Mattapan with a detailed history of business development in the community, including the viewpoints of current stakeholders. The National Main Street Center and Boston Main Streets are then introduced and evaluated in the next three chapters through an examination of published literature, as well as interviews with local Boston Main Street districts. Following a summarization of key findings from our interviews, an analysis of community connections in Mattapan and the potential for Main Streets as a vehicle to address local issues is presented. The report concludes by providing recommendations to the Mattapan Community Development Corporation for the application of a Main Streets in addition to suggested areas of future research.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Throughout the United States, Main Streets has been utilized by cities, towns, and neighborhoods to spur commercial and economic development in communities. In the city of Boston, numerous neighborhoods have adopted a Main Street program to enhance their commercial districts and promote economic opportunity. Throughout Boston’s twenty-one neighborhoods, nineteen Main Streets have arisen, each with varying degrees of success. Now, Boston’s neighborhood of Mattapan is exploring the possibility of a Main Street program, hoping to enhance Mattapan’s economic climate.

Since the release of the Mattapan Economic Development Initiative (MEDI) report by the Menino Administration in July 2006, the Mattapan Community Development Corporation has attempted to establish itself as a leading organization of development in Mattapan under the leadership of Executive Director Spencer DeShields. Endeavoring to convene economic development, MCDC identified Boston Main Streets as a possible tool for fostering the commercial revitalization of Mattapan. However, with two previous failed attempts at initiating a Main Street program by other organizations in Mattapan, MCDC decided to recruit help in analyzing the applicability of a Main Street program in one of Mattapan’s business districts.

MCDC solicited the help of a Tufts University Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) field projects team to research the prospects of Mattapan having a Main Street program. From January to May 2008, our UEP field projects researched the possibility of a Main Street program in Mattapan, acting as consultants to MCDC. In this role, our team approached our Main Streets research through the lens of business development and outreach, neighborhood mapping and connections to the community.

The methodology used to conduct our research was broad and extensive, and included examining best practices and case studies of local Main Streets in Boston, interviewing executive directors from Boston Main Streets, interviewing Mattapan community leaders in the private and public sectors, interviewing Boston city officials, attending community organization and neighborhood association meetings, distributing a business survey, geographically mapping Mattapan and conducting a focus group. Through this methodology, numerous facts and common themes emerged allowing our field projects team to provide the pros and cons of introducing a Main Street program into the different business districts of Mattapan, as well as making recommendations for the implementation process.

The recommendations in this report include:

1. Develop strategies to build community support for a Main Street program. A program will only be viable with a core group of committed citizens. Mattapan Main Streets should make a concerted effort to include leaders from across the community and ethnic groups and to make sure the planning process is not viewed as being run by the city. Conducting community meetings and focus groups will help to develop a needs assessment, allowing MCDC to determine what the business needs of the community.

2. Decide on the appropriate location for a Main Streets with deference to the community and the identified advantages and disadvantages each location provides.

A. Mattapan Square

- Most natural location for a Main Street program because it has a strong base of businesses and it is already a vibrant commercial district
- Façade improvements and a better retail mix are needed if selected.
- While opposition is likely from the Mattapan Board of Trade’s (MBT) leadership, interviews with local business owners suggest that the MBT may not represent the cumulative interests of the organization
- A Mattapan Square Main Street program would likely focus on physical improvements, business retention and diversifying the retail options

B. Morton Street

- A Morton Village Main Street program will be challenging
- Planning by the Mattapan Economic Development Initiative will ameliorate and revitalize the area economically, engendering greater possibilities for a Main Street program.
- A Main Street program in this commercial node could provide an avenue for the community and business owners to play a greater role in the upcoming economic development.
- A key issue when implementing Main Streets in Morton Village will be maintaining community support during the long, arduous development process.
• The Morton Street Board of Trade appears eager to assist with a Main Street program and is an asset to facilitating its implementation.

3. The future Main Street program should be housed within the Mattapan Community Development Corporation (MCDC) for its beginning years. This will allow the program to share resources with MCDC while it gains footing.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Our field projects team worked with the Mattapan Community Development Corporation to define the scale and meaning of our consultancy. The Mattapan Community Development Corporation requested that our group research and analyze the prospects of a Main Street program with relation to business development, community connections and neighborhood mapping. A literature review was conducted on the topics of Main Streets, business development, and community empowerment. Topical pieces of literature, academic journals, articles, theses, newsletters, and newspapers, as well as data from Harvard University’s Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston and the United States Bureau of the Census, were utilized in constructing this report. Research was conducted through examining best practices and case studies of Main Street programs in the Greater Boston Area, interviewing executive directors from Boston Main Street programs, Mattapan community leaders in the private and public sectors, Boston city officials, attending community organization and neighborhood association meetings, distributing a business survey, and organizing a focus group. Finally, geographical information systems were utilized to map the neighborhood.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION
This report was prepared for the Mattapan Community Development Corporation (MCDC) with the purpose of analyzing the applicability and potential of a Main Street program in Boston's neighborhood of Mattapan. MCDC requested that the analysis concentrate on business development, national and local Main Street programs, and community connections in relation to Mattapan and the neighborhood's business districts of Morton Street and Mattapan Square.

A Main Street program is a comprehensive, community-driven methodology used to revitalize local economies through the empowerment of local businesses and residents. In the city of Boston, numerous neighborhoods have adopted the Main Street program to enhance commercial districts and promote economic opportunity. The Mattapan Community Development Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to planning, convening and advocating for all people who live or work in Mattapan, commissioned this analysis subsequent to the city of Boston's renewed interest in the economic revitalization of Mattapan, known as the Mattapan Economic Development Initiative (MEDI). In the spring of 2003, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and the Boston Redevelopment Authority initiated MEDI to assess and direct future growth in Mattapan. The completion of the MEDI report in June of 2006 laid a foundation for further research and analysis of a Main Street program in Mattapan.

Our report begins by introducing the historic and contemporary backdrop of Mattapan's community, itemizes community assets and exposes common themes of the neighborhood. It then addresses the business-related landscape in Mattapan by presenting the commercial history and highlighting the present points-of-view of various stakeholders such as the business associations, business owners, residents and others. Then, it continues with a summary of the National Main Street program through a literature review, providing its history, an explanation of the Main Street approach to economic development, and an evaluation of the success of the program. The next section focuses specifically on the Main Street program administered in Boston, concentrating on its organizational structure, the selection process, funding availability and an evaluation of the program’s effectiveness.

Following this, a collection of conducted interviews were organized into the sixth section, titled Local Main Street Districts and Interviews. This section provides an overview of the Main Street program through the eyes and experiences of executive directors throughout Boston. Succeeding this, the report suggests a range of recommendations on the applicability of Main Streets in Mattapan, discusses how MCDC can capitalize on community themes and assets in the community and concludes with overall recommendations to MCDC.

The information, analysis and recommendations of this report derive from a series of interviews, a focus group, and meetings with Main Street program affiliates, Boston city officials and employees, businesses, community organizations and residents from Mattapan. Social, economic, and planning data utilized in this report derives from the Mattapan Economic Development Initiative of 2006, research conducted by the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, and the United States Bureau of the Census for the year 2000. Additional information was obtained through various forms of literature cited at the conclusion of this report.
CHAPTER II: COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

In guiding the Mattapan Community Development Corporation through an analysis of a Main Street program, our field projects group was asked to analyze the community environment of Mattapan. To meet this deliverable, a series of interviews, community meetings, and a focus group consisting of Mattapan residents were performed. From this research, common themes emerged with relation to Mattapan’s community, MCDC, and the Main Street program. The following section provides background information, statistics and demographics of Mattapan's community, an analysis of community assets and highlights of common themes that emerged during our conversations primarily with residents.

Mattapan, Boston’s most southeastern neighborhood, is a close-knit, young, working- to middle-class community rich with history and culture. Contiguous to Hyde Park, Dorchester and the Town of Milton, Mattapan’s neighborhood of about 37,486 residents is primarily made up of minority demographics, with 77% of Mattapan residents identifying as Black Americans (Bureau of the US Census 2000). Historically, however, Mattapan was dominated largely by Irish and Jewish immigrants. After the turn of the 20th century, massive amounts of Irish and Jewish immigrants migrated to Mattapan, establishing families and lives (Jackson 2004). However, both the Irish and Jewish populations struggled for acceptance in Protestant-dominated Boston (Jackson 2004).
In the 1960’s, Mattapan’s demographics began changing, and in ten years African and Haitian populations began dominating the area (Rappaport Institute). Migration of African and Haitian immigrants aggrandized throughout the 1970’s into the 1980’s, eventually creating the largest concentration of African-Americans and Haitian-Americans in Massachusetts (Jackson 2004). United States Census data from 2000 indicates that 16% of Mattapan residents speak primarily Haitian Creole, compared to only 4% in Boston, and less than 1% throughout Massachusetts.

Historically, Mattapan has been sparse with public amenities compared with other Boston neighborhoods. Among the younger neighborhoods in Boston, where one in three residents is under the age of 18, Mattapan had only one youth center, no high school and a run down, 75-year-old library (Rappaport Institute). According to the executive secretary for the Mattapan Board of Trade, Stephen Busby, Mattapan residents once paid high taxes while receiving fewer city services. “Mattapan was paying most in property taxes while receiving less of city and state services.” However, he contends that years of community activism and engagement have led to more services and amenities.

Today, with the exception of Chinatown, Mattapan has the least amount of public space in Boston (Rappaport Institute). It is one of Boston’s youngest neighborhoods, with a large working-class population. Thirty-four percent of Mattapan’s population is between the ages of 21-44 (Bureau of the US Census 2000). The estimated median age in 2006 was 32-years-old (Jennings 2007). While United States Census data demonstrates that 22.3% of the neighborhoods’ residents live in poverty and 67.5% of households are classified as low to moderate income, Mattapan is rich with community engagement.

The aforementioned populations serve as the building blocks for the majority of civic engagement found in Mattapan, which offers a rich array of organizations, including nonprofits, religious institutions, neighborhood associations, health related programs and immigrant assistance informal associations (Jennings 1999). These community-based organizations will be helped by several developments in the neighborhood of Mattapan.

In 2002, the city of Boston decided to replace Mattapan’s 75-year old library with a modern public one (Rappaport Institute). In 2007, the city approved the $4.5 million library and began its construction on the corner of Blue Hill Avenue and Babson Street. Positive developments continued in September 2003 when the Mildred Avenue Middle School and Community Center opened. The completion of the $37.5 million Mildred Avenue Middle School provided Mattapan with a state of the art youth center, recreational facilities for kids, a senior citizen lounge and public meeting space for community engagements (Rappaport Institute).

ASSETS AND RESOURCES
There are numerous community assets in Mattapan. Some more important assets easily identifiable by residents include:

- Residents and Community Organizations: Mattapan is filled with motivated, dedicated and caring residents, many of whom serve on community organizations. Several neighborhood associations exist that advocate planning priorities.
Common Themes to Community Life
Mattapan’s community is defined by the concept of empowerment as Mattapan residents historically have struggled to form commanding political coalitions to influence Boston’s municipal government. For Mattapan, empowerment is a continuous process that enables people to understand, upgrade and use their capacity to better control and gain power over their own lives. Empowerment provides people with choices and the ability to chose, as well as to gain more control over resources they need to improve their condition (Twelvetrees 1989).

In Mattapan empowerment exists, but it has proven to be fractious and sometimes divisive. It is clear that the individual empowerment of Mattapan residents has ensured many knowledgeable and opinionated members of the community willing to fight for Mattapan. However, small communities inhabited by self-confident, empowered citizens shaping all local matters usually engenders exceeding vulnerability whole communities who are susceptible to uncontrollable outside forces (Weissberg 1999). This problem exists in Mattapan and is a common theme in the community.

Disregard for community empowerment caused by factious individualism has been to the detriment of neighborhood associations and civic groups in Mattapan. Specifically, according to numerous Mattapan residents, the Mattapan Civic Association splintered because of competing missions, and consequently saw activism dissipate. Similar instances have occurred in the business community with regard to Main Streets as will be discussed later in the report.

The general theme of community empowerment also exists in relation to choice and access to resources. A specific issue the community is concerned with regarding choice and resources is the engagement of youth populations. Historically, community youth programs and centers for youth did not exist in Mattapan. Lacking choices to be involved in their community, many young Mattapan residents traveled outside of the community to other neighborhoods to find recreational activities.

“A specific issue the community is concerned with regarding choice and resources is the engagement of youth populations.”

One member of the Mattapan Civic Association commented during a phone interview noted the lack of youth employment opportunities. Another community member, who participated in the focus group, commented that the absence of a Boys and Girls Club in Mattapan allows for youthful mischief. Years ago, residents report, this theme was commonly voiced during deliberations and public meetings about the building of a youth center on Mildred Avenue. Although the construction of the Mildred Avenue Middle School and Community Center in 2003 mitigated some of these concerns, many residents still assert there are sparse economic opportunities for Mattapan's high school students and other young populations.

A pervasive theme easily identifiable in interviews, community meetings and the focus group that our team held is the importance of culture. By observing United States Census data, it is easy to overlook Mattapan as a diverse community. This is because 77% of Mattapan residents identify themselves as Black, 13% of residents are Hispanic or Latino and 4% are Caucasian. To characterize Mattapan’s community through these statistics would be unfortunate. Instead, as one resident proclaimed during our focus group, “Mattapan is a strong, vibrant quilt.” Another community member commented that Mattapan has approximately twenty-one different African nations represented within it and a large Haitian population. Mattapan residents believe these populations add character and a sense of community.
through their activism in religious organizations. This character extends into Mattapan’s economy and civic life. The existence of Caribbean food eateries is ample. Civically, the community abounds with cultural festivals and events, including Haitian Heritage Month in May and a Dominican parade.

“Mattapan is a strong, vibrant quilt.”

CONCLUSION
What we have depicted above is snapshot of the Mattapan community. Clearly this neighborhood is abundant with social capital that can be nurtured through a Main Street program. In addition to these many assets, Mattapan is home to a vibrant business community which we will present in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter presented background information, assessed community assets and cited common themes to community life, this chapter introduces the history of Mattapan’s commercial districts, the shifts in its demographics and past attempts at bringing a Main Street program to the community. We outline Mattapan’s current commercial nodes, focusing on the areas under consideration for Main Streets designation and the types of businesses within them. Throughout the body of the chapter, there are also accounts of the needs of some merchants providing services to the community within the commercial nodes.

We also outline proposed and potential projects for the area and discuss the specific recommended (in some cases, now incorporated) zoning changes for the area. There are also many different opinions on what a Main Street program could accomplish for Mattapan. We present these, as well as related speculations on why the program is not already in the community. By the chapter’s end, we hope to have captured some of the viewpoints of key community stakeholders.

As the Mattapan Community Development Corporation considers applying for Mattapan to become a Main Street district, there are already many existing conceptions of the program in the community. Mattapan’s most prominent business associations hold conflicting views on the program. When we contacted the majority of merchants, residents, and employees at various institutions in Mattapan about the likelihood of a Main Street program they stated that they supported it.

“[Mattapan] is a place where you can enjoy a quality of life that most people want to experience anywhere. The community is reflective of people’s desires for a quality and a public organization that responds to their needs,”

In our focus group and other discussions on the aspirations of various Mattapan stakeholders for their neighborhood, many of them refer to the past for their vision of the present. As they project into the future and attempt to forecast commercial possibilities, they speak of a time when Mattapan Square bustled and Blue Hill Avenue was dotted with businesses that responded to a range of consumer needs. Some residents that have lived through the neighborhood’s demographic shifts, periods of disinvestment and attempts by various entities to rehabilitate the area call themselves “survivors.” They explain that conversations on their many years in the community become common and that they where their memories of the community as though a badge of honor.

Whether espousing their positive or negative views on a Main Street program or aspects of their neighborhood, our experience in Mattapan indicates that it is a community comprised of people working very hard to ensure their opinion impacts their community’s future. “[Mattapan] is a place where you can enjoy a quality of life that most people want to experience anywhere. The community is reflective of people’s desires for a quality and a public organization that responds to their needs,” a resident said in our focus group discussion.

GENERAL AND COMMERCIAL HISTORY

Historically, “Mattapan” was simply known as Dorchester’s commercial district. It was then a part of Dorchester, and the area regarded now as Mattapan Square was the only area called Mattapan. The Boston Redevelopment Authority officially defined the borders of Mattapan in the 1960’s by assigning many of the areas surrounding the square their own zip code. For many years, “mixed-use” developments were the norm as ground floors of residences on Blue Hill Avenue cutting through Mattapan, Dorchester and Roxbury were storefronts. Many of these businesses served as community landmarks. A delicatessen, the G & G, was central to local life, serving as a diner and also a place for merchants to network. A variety of convenience and retail stores, credit unions, banks, kosher markets, bowling alleys, butcheries, pharmacies and a movie theater were some of the many businesses lining Blue Hill Avenue through Mattapan Square (Rappaport Institute). When the Jewish community that largely populated the area left it from the 1950’s through the 1970’s, its members also closed the doors of their businesses.

The area, which became nearly completely inhabited by black residents by the 1970’s, experienced many versions of disinvestment after its Jewish residents left. Through red-lining by banks, which designated Mattapan as an area that blacks could inhabit in Boston, and because of the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group’s (BBURG) programs that offered low-interest loans to first time black homebuyers, Mattapan experienced a significant population shift. New black buyers purchased their homes at inflated prices as real-estate agents convinced Jewish residents to sell their homes at below market-rates.

Eventually, Mattapan and its surrounding areas experienced tremendous decline. Buyers could not afford the homes they purchased at inflated prices, and often, the properties required extensive repairs (Kindleberger and Walker 1992). Vacancies, foreclosures and cases of arson also increased. Vacant lots multiplied along Blue Hill Avenue. In 1979, the city owned 250 of these lots, and another 90 were privately held (Rappaport Institute). The
commercial districts that lined Blue Hill Avenue, including Morton Street, slowly died when the businesses that comprised them continued to fail. In contrast, Mattapan Square thrived as its counterparts, including Morton Street, along the Blue Hill Avenue corridor slowly faded (Rappaport Institute).

Through the years, Boston has undertaken many initiatives meant to stave off the decline of its commercial districts. However, the city did not specifically target the entire Mattapan area in those initiatives. In 1977, it set to reconstruct the portion of Blue Hill Avenue between Morton Street and the Grove Hall area. The following year, the city applied to the federal government for over $7.5 million in grant funds to rehabilitate Blue Hill Avenue, which would have benefitted its portions running through Mattapan. During the 1980’s, through the Boston Urban Gardeners’ program, the city planted trees on the Avenue and created urban gardens planted by Boston youths.

In the 1990’s, the Menino Administration launched the RESTORE program to launch community economic development. That program, from 1994 to 1999, was credited for many positive changes in area businesses:

RESTORE renovated or expanded 30 businesses, helped establish 12 new businesses, retained 180 jobs, created 40 jobs, and invested $2 million in public-private partnerships on Blue Hill Avenue. In all, public-private investment along Blue Hill Avenue totaled more than $51 million between 1994 and 1999 (Rappaport Institute).

While the city launched programs such as RESTORE, which indirectly helped areas of Mattapan, it also introduced Boston Main Streets to revitalize the commercial districts within its neighborhoods.

As various areas of Boston received “Main Streets” designation, a group of Mattapan stakeholders decided that Mattapan needed special attention in terms of business development and applied to bring the program to the neighborhood. During those early years, Lilly Searcy, now director of Action for Boston Community Development’s Family Service Center in Mattapan, spearheaded the process that would have brought the organization to the Square.

Searcy said that some 100 people contributed to putting together the application. A professional grant writer wrote all of the materials requested by the city. Businesses pledged nearly $10,000 to support the effort. Others within this application committee agreed to donate their time. “One organization did not support it, and that stopped the process. The city did not want any controversy,” she said. (As we will see later, the Mattapan Board of Trade is resistant to the idea of bringing Main Streets to Mattapan.)

“For the application to move forward, there has to be support from the business community. I hope that they are not repeating the cycle.”

Some years later in 2001, Searcy attempted, again, to bring a Main Street program to Mattapan Square. According to her, that application did not succeed because of a lack of community consensus. The Main Street application packet clearly requires widespread support for a community to host a program:

Broad based neighborhood support for the commercial district’s revitalization and for long term participation in Boston Main Streets. Merchant organizations, neighborhood organizations, schools, religious institutions, property owners, residents, civic groups and lending institutions should be willing to work together as a team for the successful revitalization of the commercial district (Boston Main Streets application).

Searcy also admits that the second process did not have the same range of community stakeholders supporting it. “It needed more community participation.”

She knows that the Mattapan Community Development Corporation (MCDC) and other stakeholders aim to submit another application to the city when it announces the newest request for proposals. “For the application to move forward, there has to be support from the business community. I hope that they are not repeating the cycle.” Today, if the city makes another call for proposals for another Main Street program, the problems which foiled past attempts, still exist today.

COMMERCIAL NODES AND PROPOSED PROJECTS

Part of Mattapan’s current business climate is that the region has essentially four commercial nodes. There are some areas of commercial activity on River Street that are not under consideration by the parties now interested in applying for Main Street designation. The clusters that are under consideration are best defined in the city of Boston’s Mattapan Economic Development Initiative (MEDI) report. One area is on Morton Street, specifically its most active areas of commerce from Selden Street to Norfolk Avenue. There is also another cluster of businesses on Morton Street that caters to the Haitian community.

The other area under serious consideration for the Main Street program is the series of stores from Mattapan Square to Morton Street on Blue Hill Avenue. There are many individuals and entities that would prefer to see the program launch in the square, which is zoned by the BRA as a community
commercial sub-district, in acknowledgement of its high level of commer-
cial activity (MEDI Report 2006). The nodes of Morton Street and the parts
of Blue Hill Avenue that are in Mattapan outside the Square are zoned as
neighborhood shopping sub-districts (MEDI report 2006). This designa-
tion allows areas to receive significant levels of commercial activity, though
lower than Mattapan Square.

For the stakeholders that consider Mattapan Square the most appropri-
ate location for a Main Street program, they see the area’s compactness
as its greatest advantage. The Square is dense with three banks: Sover-
eign, Bank of America and Citizens; a clothing chain store, Ashley Stewart;
and a series of dollar stores. At its gateway from Milton, it is anchored by
Domino’s Pizza on River Street and two cell-phone companies, T-Mobile
and Nextel on Blue Hill Avenue. It has a supermarket – Mars Farmers
Market – which primarily caters to immigrants, selling inexpensive familiar
items from their home countries that they will not find in the local Shaws or
Stop & Shop. According to many community sources, Mars’ revenues rival
those of Mattapan’s only pharmacy, Walgreens, located at the corner of Tai-
bot Avenue and Morton Street. There is also a Shaws in nearby Lower Mills
and Stop & Shop in Roslindale on Cummins Highway. One source pegged
Mars’ revenues at $450,000 per week, although we could not indepen-
dently confirm this figure. Mattapan Square also has fast food restaurants,
including a McDonald’s; a gas station; a classic hot-dog stand; doctor’s and
chiropractic offices and more.

Over the years, whether from the city’s reinvestment initiatives or the where-
withal of the merchants that have launched businesses in the area, Morton Street has also experienced a resurgence. Twenty-five businesses on the
street primarily nestled between Norfolk Avenue and Selden Streets formed
the Morton Street Chamber of Commerce. Maria Monteiro, owner of
Apollo’s Furniture, is a 26-year-veteran of the district and current member
of the chamber. She is originally from Cape Verde, and speaks of the positive
changes manifesting in the community. “It’s getting better, and we’re trying
to make it a good place to shop. We took down the grates, and now, the
windows stay open all night. It’s beautiful right now,” she said. The funds
for the rehabilitation of her business and the adjacent stores, which she sold
to her brother, came through city of Boston programs.

“We stick together. If there are issues, we discuss them with each other.
We’ll have a meeting soon, and Danny Hardaway [the chamber’s president] brings our concerns to the city.” Monteiro thinks that a Main Street program
will help the area, “It will be helpful if we can get it.” One of the issues that
she says she hopes the program can help settle is the community’s parking
woes. “We have a lot of three-family houses across from us. They have to
park and that’s not going to be resolved,” she said.

“It’s getting better, and we’re trying to make it a
good place to shop. We took down the grates,
and now, the windows stay open all night. It’s
beautiful right now.”

A community eyesore that she wants to see fixed is the dilapidated old po-
lice station building that sits at 872 Morton Street. A survey we conducted
of other merchants on Morton Street show that they share Moneteiro’s
sentiments on 872 Morton. The site received approval for development by
JudgeCo, LLC, of Jamaica Plain. If the project proceeds as planned, it will
produce 28 condominiums, 2000-square feet of retail space and 40-off-
street parking spaces.

Other projects are also in store for this main thoroughfare. One proposed
project is for 875 Morton St. There are two versions of what will eventually
be built there. If the Morton Plaza vision for the site prevails, Taylor Smith
Properties will bring 80-100 jobs to the community and 64,000-sq.-ft of
retail space to that lot. Currently, though, the site is being used as a whole-
sale warehouse for Economy Plumbing and Heating Supply Co., whose
owners hold the property’s lease.

The Mattapan Community Development Corporation is also looking to add
to the housing stock on Morton Street. It is in talks with the David family to
redevelop 759-767 Morton Street as Morton Street Homes. The anticipated
Another project also in development on Morton Street is Olmsted Green/Boston State. It will add to the community 287-homewonership condominiums and townhouses; 153-rental units; a 123-bed, skilled-nursing facility; 83-units of senior rental housing, an expanded community center, greenhouse and job-training facility. The development is the result of a partnership between the Lena Park Community Development Corporation and the New Boston Fund.

Finally, the last of Mattapan’s commercial nodes being examined for a Main Street program is the portion of Blue Hill Avenue that is between Morton Street and Mattapan Square. Morning Star Baptist Church owns a significant number of parcels in this area:

…The Avenue is dominated by land owned and being developed by Morning Star Baptist Church, as well as a strip of vacant industrial space. Bright new businesses such as Lenny’s Bakery and Restaurant are evidence that commercial prospects in the area are improving, just as they have improved along other sections of Blue Hill Avenue to the north and south. Other businesses in the area include a check-cash service, manicurist, hair salon, small restaurants, and a Mobil Station and grocer. Some storefronts are vacant in November 2002, and many are covered in metal grates (Rappaport Institute).

As highlighted by MEDI, the commercial districts in Mattapan tend to offer duplicate businesses and services, and this node is no exception.

**GENERAL STATISTICS ON BUSINESSES IN RELEVANT COMMERCIAL NODES**

The MEDI report also compiled some general statistics on the three areas receiving primary consideration for a Main Street program. It reported that cumulatively Mattapan Square, and the Morton Street and Blue Hill Avenue business districts have over 200 businesses, 34 health service and social service organizations, 13 churches (although the community dispute this figure pointing to the many storefront churches) and two schools.

Although there are a large number of businesses in the area, some types of establishments appear to be overrepresented, whereas other categories of businesses have few if any examples in the current inventory. For example, there are 40 personal care establishments (primarily hair, nails, and/or skin salons), 26 limited-service restaurants or fast food establishments, and 22 auto service or parts stores along the MEDI commercial corridors. Collectively, these represent 44 or almost half, of the business establishments...
lishments located along the MEDI commercial corridors. In contrast, however, there are only 3 “full service” restaurants in the MEDI study area. There is only one mid-sized or large grocery store (located on the southern end of Mattapan Square), and no “superstore”-type supermarket within the MEDI study area. Similarly, there is only one pharmacy, located on the northern periphery of the study area off Morton Street. There are no enter tainment establishments (theaters, music venues, etc.) (MEDI report 2006).

Hence, while the Mattapan area offers a wealth of some services, it also lacks many others.

ZONING AND URBAN DESIGN

Another facet of Mattapan’s story is the zoning in the districts under consideration. According to Jeremy Rosenberger, the BRA’s planner for Mattapan, there are three approval levels that projects receive when they are presented by developers. Projects that receive an “A” meet all established regulations and standards. A “C” stands for conditional approval and shows that the project needs review. He gave the example of a restaurant with night music as the type of entity that might receive such a “C” approval. Any project that receives an “F” is deemed forbidden. With that rating the project can only proceed through approvals from the zoning board of appeals and significant community support.

For private residences, the area is zoned as one-two-three and multi-family residential. Cemeteries, park lands, recreational areas, community gardens, and urban plazas are zoned as open spaces. Businesses in the area operate under the following guidelines:

Existing zoning separates the MEDI study area’s commercial sub-districts into two types, Neighborhood Shopping and Community Commercial. The existing Neighborhood Shopping sub-district includes Morton Street between Norfolk Street and Selden Street and Blue Hill Avenue between Hiawatha Road and Morton Street. The Community Commercial sub-district includes Mattapan Square north to Blue Hill Avenue and Almont Street. These two sub-commercial sub-districts allow slightly different uses, with the Community Commercial sub-district allowing more intense commercial uses, such as banks, cinemas, and retail businesses on the second story, “as of right” (meaning that no approval is required before beginning a use) (MEDI Report 2006).

In addition to outlining the currently permitted zoning for the area, the MEDI report also recommended changes to the zoning codes as the area looks to revitalize its commercial districts. It advocated the allowance of parking garages, limited street-level offices and further review of the “as of right” uses. The rules that usually lead to a project receiving conditional approval should also be reevaluated, the report stated. It recommended incorporating incentives into the zoning codes to encourage desirable uses such as residential units and affordable housing in commercial developments. It also advocated special bonuses for developers that create parking spaces targeting those that carpool and drive fuel-efficient cars.

The report also suggests some urban design changes for the area, including raising maximum building heights from 45ft. to 55ft in Mattapan Square and from 35ft to 45ft on Blue Hill Avenue and Morton Street’s commercial districts. MEDI’s report also urged for consistency in Mattapan’s street wall, the side of its buildings facing the street. Other ideas included requiring that parking lots be at the rear of or underneath buildings, prohibiting free-standing signs such as billboards in Mattapan Square and Morton Street and encouraging the use of grates that allow passers-by views of store displays as they walk or drive through the community.

SOME STAKEHOLDERS

After outlining Mattapan’s historical past, its previous attempts at seeking Main Street designation and the layout of the various parts of the neighborhood, this chapter now focuses almost exclusively on the community’s stakeholders. One organization that has consistently opposed the formation of a Main Street district in Mattapan Square is the Mattapan Board of Trade (MBT). Its 1613 Blue Hill Avenue office walls proudly proclaim its 70 years of service to the business community. MBT’s mission statement is simply ten words long: “To work for the civic and economic progress of Mattapan.”

Stephen Busby, its executive secretary, explained MBT’s aversion to the Main Street program. “It’s like bringing government into the business community to tell the merchants what to do. Main Streets cannot defy the city’s demands,” he said. Busby explains that the business community in Mattapan Square does not support the program now and will never do so in the future. “Although a division of the city, the BRA [which he sees as a proponent of Main Streets] also receives a portion of the developments it creates,” he said.

He also said that the incorporation of a Main Street program in Mattapan Square would lead to the elimination of the board of trade. When asked whether a Main Street program could eventually supplant the board of trade, Jeremy Rosenberger, BRA planner for Mattapan, said, “There are many instances where Main Streets coexists with boards of trade and CDC’s. In Mattapan, we want everyone to work together. Main Streets brings in one person to look after the businesses, get rid of grates and link businesses to people. The manager oversees the district.”
“It’s like bringing government into the business community to tell the merchants what to do. Main Streets cannot defy the city’s demands.”

Beyond the Main Street program, Busby is also an unofficial community historian. Thirty years ago, he was a transplant from the South End, who came to Mattapan because of its affordability. Now he is also a property owner. Many years of community activism and engagement lead to the construction of a new building for the library at the intersection of Blue Hill Avenue and Babson Street, he said. He also addressed another topic that the community must tackle if it applies for “Main Street” designation: Are retail chains or convenience stores better for the neighborhood?

“Big stores tend to contribute less than smaller ones. Chains, by and large, contribute a lot less than smaller stores. Owners are usually from the community. Mom and pops versus chain stores makes the difference between zero participation in community events or full participation. Mom and pops have the ability to respond to the tastes and needs of a community while chains shift materials to another store. Mom and pops are able to adapt quickly to market. With chains, it’s whether the community fits its model, or it’ll close,” he said.

Busby also said that the turnover rate within the square is very low, which works in the greater district’s favor. “Vacancy encourages vacancy -- the more compact the districts, the more exciting for shoppers.” A strong shopping node mimics the concept of malls, which in turn, increases property values since there will be stability in the district. “Concentration increases services to customers and foot traffic,” he said. Ultimately, when looking to Mattapan’s future and the new businesses that the square and community needs, he stated, “We would give everything for a great restaurant -- a nice sit down restaurant that can host events.” He also cited other venues and businesses the community currently lacks: gyms, credit unions or chain restaurants such as Applebees.

Two current business owners operating in the Square said the following: “I support it [Main Street Program]. I’m for anything that uplifts the face of the businesses in the Square,” said Jeff Brewster, owner of McDonald’s. Nunotte Zama, an attorney with a law practice in the area, said, “There are no drawbacks to revitalizing the community. We need to make it more attractive. Mattapan Square is close to public transportation, and there is enough parking around. It can always be beautified. More money needs to be put into advertising. It would be nice if people from outside the community knew what it has to offer.” In addition to Mattapan, Zama’s clients come from nearby Braintree and Quincy, as well.

While MBT purports to speak for the businesses of Mattapan Square, the Morton Street Board of Commerce represents the interests of businesses on Morton Street. Danny Hardaway, its president, holds a viewpoint that is completely contrary to Busby’s. He owns A Final Touch clothing store on Morton Street and says that he has been working to bring a Main Street program to the Morton Street area for several years as a member of the MEDI implementation team. “We don’t want to alienate anybody but, instead, want to see the community receive as many resources as possible. I have a vision for Morton Street to see it become an area that is known for its boutiques, restaurants and beauty. We think that having a Main Street program can only help.” Hardaway says that his work as the head of the board of commerce contributed to the naming of the clusters of businesses in the Morton Street area from Seldon Street to Norfolk Avenue to Morton Village. Cameras now record all activities occurring at Morton Street, and the board of commerce is also working with the city to bring better street lights to the community.

“We need to make it more attractive. Mattapan Square is close to public transportation, and there is enough parking around. It can always be beautified. More money needs to be put into advertising. It would be nice if people from outside the community knew what it has to offer.”

CURRENT BUSINESSES ON MORTON STREET

Ten businesses in the 25 member board of commerce responded to a survey conducted by our field project team. They ranked their impression of Mattapan from their vantage points on Morton Street and provided information on their needs and practices, level of interest in economic development opportunities and the demographics of their customers. They assessed their impression of the community as fair or good. Among those surveyed, all respondents identified the old police station as an eyesore in the community. Of the new amenities they hope to see added to the community, many of them cited a movie theater, gym, book store, bakery and high-end restaurant. They identified Morton Street’s location, public transportation accessibility, community spirit and customer base as advantages to doing business in Mattapan. Disadvantages ranged from individuals loitering in front of businesses, a lack of parking in the district to few opportunities for collaborations among the members of the business community.
Most of the merchants hail from Dorchester, but one travels to his small convenience store from Rhode Island. They also need more information on the local economy, customer service programs and retail and special event coordination. To become more competitive, they want information on retaining and attracting customers, assessing and using technologies, dealing with competition and financial management. They worry about business and property taxes, rents, lease, utility and insurance costs.

Some merchants indicate a need for the types of technical assistance that is synonymous with Main Streets: façade and window display improvement, business networking events, design and layout assistance and business improvement grants. Their customers are of all ages. Eighty percent of them will try to reach a different demographic. “There are never enough customers,” one respondent wrote. Sixty percent felt that Mattapan is a safe area for conducting business while the remainder of those surveyed disagreed. Whether or not they felt the community was safe for conducting business, they all felt the community needs more foot patrols by the police.

**MCDC: WHY MAIN STREETS?**

Given the disparate views on Main Streets by the Mattapan Board of Trade and Morton Street Chamber of Commerce on whether the program is
appropriate for Mattapan, Spencer DeShields, executive director of the Mattapan Development Corporation and also a member of the MEDI implementation team, addressed why his organization is interested in bringing the program to Mattapan:

The surveys that we have taken say that the population around Mattapan does not go to Mattapan to shop — a red signal that there is something wrong. What is wrong? [The commercial districts] don’t have what they want? [They] don’t have the quality of business, façade wise. Businesses close. … Mattapan has grown population wise, which means that that thriving retail center or district that existed before, should be thriving now. But the Brigham’s Ice Cream left, no grocery store, no pharmacy, no bookstore. I have a top 19 list of things they want in Mattapan. If you have a seven-year-old son to take to trumpet lessons, no place to do it — Daughter to take ballet, no place to do it. It is one of those build and they’ll come. If you have the façade and traction for those kinds of things, there are people here who will frequent and in fact shop and do what needs to be done.

Although his preference would be to see the program in Mattapan Square, the historic lack of support for it there led him to seek out partners in the other commercial nodes. Hardaway’s chamber of commerce complements his goals, and so they are both attempting to work together in bringing the program to the Morton Street area and Blue Hill Avenue through the Babson Street intersection. “The Main Streets needs to start on Morton Street as a phase one because there is a committed group of retail merchants who want to do it — the largest organization of merchants in Mattapan….You don’t have to convince anyone.” He feels strongly that the community can only benefit from the presence of the program in the community.

OTHER VIEWS AND MORE STAKEHOLDERS

Another source, familiar with the pitfalls of the previous application processes, said, “I would support Main Streets on Morton Street. They’re unified and have one voice. Property owners in the Square don’t care, so long as they get money. Main Streets may impose by asking the stores to upgrade. The Square is designed for outsiders to take from the community without giving back.” This point about “outsiders” arose in various conversations with community stakeholders. Many of them stated that the Square is comprised of the property owners that fled the community as its demographic changed. “Whoever owns the property is who is in control,” a source said.

The individuals with this point of view feel that the primary difference between the business nodes in Mattapan Square and Morton Street and Blue Hill Avenue is in the property owners’ level of commitment to the community. Because the property owners in the Square live outside of it, they are not as invested in its development. These individuals expressed that they feel the Mattapan Board of Trade, in actuality, represents those absentee landlords rather than the Square’s current crop of businesses, “As long as the property owners don’t want it [Main Streets], it’s not going anywhere,” one person said.

“I would support Main Streets on Morton Street. They’re unified and have one voice. Property owners in the Square don’t care, so long as they get money. Main Streets may impose by asking the stores to upgrade. The Square is designed for outsiders to take from the community without giving back.”

In another interview session, a resident defined Main Streets as follows: “From my little bit of understanding, businesses that aren’t doing the right thing don’t want [Main Streets] in. If that is the case, I want them in. Mattapan Square is terrible. We need businesses in there like CVS. [There are no] businesses there that I would go to. I’ve lived here a zillion years, and I don’t go to Mattapan Square. All of my money goes elsewhere. Many people I know don’t go there at all. I am a shopper, but nothing there responds to my needs.”

CONCLUSION

The Mattapan Community Development Corporation initiated an important dialogue through this current evaluation of the community’s ability to host a Main Street program. Its exploration is leading many stakeholders to conduct their own assessment of their contributions to Mattapan. Another appraisal is in the form of a question posed by the resident above. What is Main Streets, and would it be appropriate for Mattapan, its square and other commercial nodes? Is it a “thorn in the side of businesses” or a well-designed, public-private initiative that connects businesses to resources while revitalizing commercial districts? We will address these questions and more in the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV: NATIONAL MAIN STREETS INTRODUCTION

Now that we have provided background information on commercial development and the business climate in Mattapan, we will introduce a tool to provide economic revitalization: the National Main Street program. We will start with a brief history of the National Main Street Center and an explanation of the “Main Street Four Point Approach.” We then move to an evaluation of this approach using information gathered from journal articles, reports, theses, and case studies of Main Streets. The goal of this chapter is to explain the purpose the National Main Street program and to evaluate the impact that this approach has had on revitalizing commercial centers.

PROGRAM HISTORY

The American “Main Street” was once the center of economic and social activity in our cities. Downtown was a place for merchants to sell goods that match local preferences, for professionals to offer traditional services, for families to congregate, for teenagers to go to the movies on Saturday nights, and for citizens to go to church on Sundays (Kemp 2000). By the 1970s, however, American commercial districts had begun to decline. This decline was the result of a combination of forces -- the construction of highways encouraging automobile use, federal mortgage policy biased towards the suburbs, white flight, tax and zoning policies that encouraged businesses to move to the suburbs, and the increase of retail stores in shopping malls. Independent “Mom & Pop” stores were caught off guard by the big box stores and as the strip malls drew customers away downtown, Main Street businesses folded. Main Street grew shabby, its economic base gradually eroded, and many people doubted it could ever recover (Dane 1997). Despite long periods of disinvestment and depopulation, downtown districts are rebounding as a result of policies aimed at revitalizing commercial districts. One of the most well-known revitalization strategies is the Main Street program.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation launched the “Main Street Project” in 1977 aimed to discover why downtown districts were deteriorating and to pinpoint a successful revitalization strategy. Three communities were selected through a regional competition to receive consultation services to determine their assets and needs and to provide assistance with design improvements and economic revitalization. The communities were also assigned a program manager to coordinate the long-term revitalization effort on the ground, working closely with stakeholders in the community. Significant improvements were made in each of the three districts and several important elements for success became apparent: the need for a strong leadership, promotion, design, organization, and a comprehensive process. The lessons learned from the demonstration project would ultimately provide the foundation for what would become the signature Main Street Four Point Approach.

Building upon the success of the demonstration project, the National Main Street Center was established in 1980. Main Streets quickly evolved from a small regional organization to a national movement. Today, the National Main Street Center (NMSC) acts as a clearinghouse for local organizations by providing technical assistance, consulting services, and hosting an annual national conference. NMSC offers a membership program that not only facilitates networking, but also provides educational publications, a monthly newsletter, and other tools to help Main Street staff and volunteers keep up to date on the latest developments in neighborhood commercial revitalization. According to the National Trust Main Street Center’s website, there are approximately 40 statewide, citywide, and regional Main Street programs with more than 1,200 active local programs active today.

EXPLANATION OF MAIN STREET APPROACH

The mission of the National Trust Main Street Center is to empower people, organizations, and communities to achieve ongoing downtown and neighborhood district revitalization based on the principles of self-determination, resource conservation, and incremental transformation represented through the comprehensive Main Street Four-Point Approach (National Main Street Center).

The Main Street program is a place-based revitalization strategy that focuses on the neighborhood as the geographic unit for economic development. Unlike the Business Improvement District model, which provides only an organizational and funding structure, the Main Street model is a private-public partnership that utilizes a comprehensive and incremental approach (de la Torre 2005). The Main Street program has a unique methodology that combines historic preservation and economic revitalization through a broad-based coalition of stakeholders. A major strength of this approach is that it provides a ready-made framework for revitalization that can be adapted in both urban and rural settings. Dane (1997) highlighted such versatility in a study of 44 Main Street programs ranging from rural to urban communities where within 10 years, the programs had generated an average of 95 building rehabs, 72 new businesses, and 348 jobs for each community. In addition, the programs had on average a 61% drop in vacancy rates for first-floor retail units.

The cornerstone of the successful methodology is the patented “Main Street Four Point Approach.” The four points of organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring, are combined to create a comprehensive strategy to revitalize the downtown. Organization involves unifying everyone under the same vision by building consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders—residents, property owners, business
owners, and local institutions. Promotion refers to the creation of a positive image for the district, highlighting unique characteristics through special events. Design is centered on improving the physical attributes of the district, including an emphasis on historical buildings. The last, and perhaps most challenging, is economic restructuring. Here the focus is on expanding the commercial district’s current assets while working to diversify the economic base. The Four Points are additionally solidified by eight guiding principles including: comprehensive, incremental, self-help, partnerships, assets, quality, change, and implementation. The Four Points complemented by the eight principles help Main Streets remain unique from other redevelopment approaches.

The Four-Point Approach is incorporated into the structure of local Main Street programs. Every program has a board of directors, an executive director, and a committee for each of the four points. The typical Main Street program operates as a 501(c)(3), an independent non-profit. There are, however, alternative organizational structures including housing the program within a city government or an existing organization such as a community development corporation, or a special taxation district, such as a business improvement district (BID). Local Main Street districts are typically designated by the state government which provides limited funding and technical assistance. The local programs raise operating funds from the community through membership fees, in-kind donations, corporate donations, events and fundraising projects. A major source of the funding comes from local businesses although additional financial resources can be obtained through governmental grants or foundations.

The essence of each Main Street program is that it is a broad-based coalition of volunteers. The program brings all of the community’s stakeholders together - the business owners, residents, non-profits, and local government officials. The Main Street model transcends real estate development and small-business assistance by building both capacity and community support with the aim of creating an appealing environment that attracts the pedestrian activity essential to vital commercial districts (Seidman 2004). Main Streets, however, is not designed to produce immediate change. The theory is that small changes over time can lead to big improvements. As such, the Main Street approach sits in stark contrast to large-scale development projects such as sports stadiums.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Statistics gathered from the National Main Street Center website indicate that the program has positively affected local commercial districts. Between 1980 to 2006, the net gain has been 77,799 businesses, 349,148 jobs, and 186,820 building rehabilitations. Approximately $45 billion has been reinvested in the districts from public and private sources with an average reinvestment ratio in each community of $25.76 to $1. This ratio means that for each dollar used to operate the Main Street program, $25.76 has been generated within the community. The National Main Street Center has relied heavily on tracking such statistics in an effort to evaluate the success of its program. A drawback to this statistical analysis is that economic improvements cannot be attributed solely to Main Streets (Gates 2005). There are several other community factors and economic forces that may play a role in the improvements within the commercial centers.

While the Main Street approach has the potential to improve commercial centers, there are also drawbacks to its methodology. Main Streets is broader than other revitalization efforts, but it is not comprehensive within the community development context as it does not address social issues such as housing, employment, poverty, and crime that are faced by lower income communities (Seidman 2002b). In addition, the Four Point Approach does not provide much flexibility regarding organizational structure. In order to be recognized as a “Main Street” program, a local district must adhere to all four points, regardless of their relevance to the community. Such an approach can be difficult when communities do not have a large enough volunteer base to support four independent committees and other activities (Gates 2005).

Another major drawback is the reliance upon local districts to raise the majority of their funds. In 2003, 40% of all Main Street districts indicated that a major challenge was funding (Smith 2004). Additionally, one of the program’s touted strengths is also one of its weaknesses - the reliance upon volunteers. Dane (1988) found that that urban Main Street programs would not survive without finding volunteers yet the districts faced stiff competition among other local organizations. Funding was just one of five main causes found to occur consistently in Main Street programs that have become inactive. Gates (2005) determined that structure, funding, program flexibility, lack of local commitment of time and resources and unattainable community expectations for a ‘quick fix’ have contributed in combination to the failure of a sample of Main Street programs. Gates argues that the National Main Street Center (NMSC) does not address the reasons why these programs fail. Rather than focusing on highlighting the program’s successes through economic statistics, NMSC should assist states by conducting a needs assessment and an analysis of at-risk and inactive programs to determine where improvements can be made. In addition, NMSC should work towards creating a more flexible approach which allows communities to better adapt the program to their own needs.

The transferability of the Main Street program to urban neighborhoods such as Mattapan has also been questioned. Dane (1988) found that urban neighborhood Main Street programs experienced territorial competition and had concerns about gentrification and displacement of retail businesses. She concluded that the most important of the four points to urban neigh-
borhood districts is organization. Without a strong community consensus, the Main Street effort would fail. Seidman (2004) further elaborates on the challenges of adapting the Main Street model to urban neighborhoods. He highlights the special attention needed for public safety, the multiple ethnic, racial, and income makeup of communities, and the navigation of the complicated political and organization environment.

The diverse ethnic make-up of urban communities can also be an asset for local Main Street programs. Through a case study of Hyde/Jackson Square Main Streets (HJMS) in Boston, De la Tore (2005) found that three components can turn ethnicity into an asset rather than a barrier for economic revitalization: (1) the extent to which ethnic business owners are selected and integrated; (2) outreach and communication strategies to engage ethnic business owners and to show benefits of participation; and (3) promotional efforts tied to the ethnicity of the community to create a competitive advantage. HJMS has employed the above tactics, allowing it to leverage ethnicity to give its commercial district a promotional edge over neighboring areas.

**CONCLUSION**

Despite an imperfect methodology, Main Streets has had a positive impact on the revival of the American downtown. In 1999, the Boston Main Street program was selected for “Wanted: Solutions for America,” a research project focusing on 19 nationwide programs with demonstrable results that can be replicated elsewhere. Perhaps even greater than such demonstrable results and economic statistics are the intangible results. One of the greatest legacies of the Main Street movement has been recapturing the positive image of “Main Street.” After years of negative connotations “Main Street” has recaptured the loyalty of a jaded American public (Dane 1997).
CHAPTER V: BOSTON MAIN STREETS

INTRODUCTION:
The previous chapter provided insight on the Main Street Four Point Approach and the National Main Street Center. We will now provide background information on Boston Main Streets. We will begin with a brief history of the program followed by a discussion of the current organization and supportive services. We will conclude with an evaluation of the program’s implementation which has been drawn from reports, articles, theses, and case studies of local Boston Main Street districts.

PROGRAM HISTORY
Main Streets first came to Boston during the National Main Street Center’s urban demonstration in 1980. Roslindale Village was chosen because it was plagued by disinvestment, arson, and competition from nearby Dedham mall. After three years Roslindale Village Main Streets had contributed to the creation of 32 new businesses, 50 building improvements, and $4.5 million in private investment. The physical character of the village had been enhanced and a greater collaboration of stakeholders had been achieved (Dane 1988). Today, the Roslindale Village Main Streets continues to thrive by providing assistance to local businesses, hosting numerous cultural events, and working towards making its district “elder-friendly”.

In 1995, the success of the program in Roslindale Village inspired Mayor Thomas Menino to launch Boston Main Streets, the first urban, multi-district Main Street program in the United States. Mayor Menino committed city and federal funds to support the organization. He also created an office within the city government to manage the program. Boston Main Streets is a unit of the Office of Business Development within the Department of Neighborhood Development. In 1995, Boston Main Streets held its first competitive application process and 10 districts were selected from 18 applications. Ten more districts were selected in successive competitive rounds in 1997, 1999, and 2001. Of the original 21, 19 Main Street districts are still in existence today.

SELECTION AND ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL DISTRICTS
The selection process to become a Boston Main Streets district includes a lengthy written application, a concrete action plan, maps of the district, letters of support from businesses and residents, and an oral presentation by community members. Upon selection the individual Main Street districts form a separate 501(c)(3) non profit. Each district is set up under the National Main Street model, depicted in the previous chapter. The board of directors, committees, and executive director choose how to implement their own revitalization effort with assistance from Boston Main Streets. This effort can include activities such as business assistance and recruitment, community events, storefront improvements, helping with the permitting and licensing process, and working to improve district’s cleanliness, safety, or infrastructure. The districts report to the Boston office each month on the status of their efforts including updates on the number of new storefront improvements, new jobs created, and more.

SUPPORT AND INITIATIVES
The local Main Street districts receive a wide-range of supportive services from Boston Main Streets. The executive directors from the local districts meet monthly with the Boston Main Streets staff. To assist with promotion there are several city-wide initiatives including a weekly public television program: “Making Your Neighborhood Work,” the “Beyond Baked Beans” guidebook, and variety of “On Main Street” events such as “Holidays on Main Street,” “Shopping on Main Street” and “Dining on Main Street.” For economic restructuring, the city has contracted with OKM Associates to provide a market analysis for 11 of the local districts. Such analysis helps determine consumer habits, economic capacity, and the needs of the commercial district. With this data individual districts can develop a strategy that can be specific to their needs to support existing businesses and attract new enterprises (Boston Main Streets Annual Report 2003).

Boston Main Streets sets itself apart from other Main Street programs through a variety of initiatives in addition to the promotional activities listed above. Boston Main Streets has introduced a ‘fifth’ point: technology. In 2003, Boston Main Streets began an effort to bridge the technology gap between the national chains, vendors, and suppliers and the smaller independent businesses. To address this challenge BMS has upgraded the technical capacity of the local districts through hardware and technical assistance to create and maintain websites (Boston Main Streets Annual Report 2003). In addition, Boston Main Streets has launched the WiFi Initiative under which it has provided two districts, Mission Hill and Roslindale Village with wireless internet capabilities for residents and business owners.

Another unique initiative is the Boston Community Change card. This is a loyalty card that uses “cause marketing” to encourage residents to shop within the Main Street districts and to generate revenue within the community. There are currently 180 merchants that accept the card. Discounts are set by the businesses and part of the sales proceeds go to Main Streets while another portion is donated to a local charity of the customer’s choice. The Community Change card is now being launched nationally with Puget Sound, New York, as the second Main Street program to implement it. The Community Change card has had mixed results. Interviews with Boston Main Street staff and local districts indicate that there have been issues with convincing businesses to sign on to the program as well as technical issues
regarding card transactions.

**PROGRAM FUNDING**

While Boston Main Streets has increased its services and assistance over the years, there continues to be issues with funding. Former Director of Boston Main Streets, Emily Haber cited the greatest challenged faced by the program is the long-term sustainability of each of the neighborhood programs (Haber and Seidman 2005). Initially the City of Boston only intended to fund each program for four years at which time the local organization was expected to raise sufficient funds on its own. This expectation has proven to be unrealistic as all of the districts are still being funded by the city of Boston despite having been in existence for over four years.

According to an interview with Stephen Gilman, Acting Director of Boston Main Streets, each district currently gets $30,000 in Community Block Development Grants for their executive director’s salary and another $1,000 for operations and promotions, but this has to be matched by the district. While districts used to get $100,000 towards store improvements, there is now a limited first-come, first-serve pool of money. This funding is also matched such that the applying business has to pay for half of the improvement project.

An additional Boston-unique funding element is the Corporate Buddy Program. Each district is matched with a local institution that commits to annual donations. Originally, the city of Boston assigned each district a corporate buddy that would provide $10,000 annually for four years. The responsibility for finding a buddy has since been transferred to the local districts. The theory behind this change is that it will generate better relationships between the local district and their corporate buddy (Seidman 2004).

A significant source of the funding for Main Streets is achieved at the local level through fundraising and donations from businesses and community members. The pressure to be constantly fundraising was mentioned in many of the interviews that will be discussed in the next chapter. To help alleviate some of the burden, the Boston Main Streets Foundation was established in 2005. Starting in 2007, local districts received $25,000 from the Boston Main Streets Foundation. In an interview, Stephen Gilman explained that the criterion for the grants is very broad and the hope is that the $25,000 will allow districts to focus more on revitalization and less on fundraising.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Boston Main Streets continues to have an impact on the revitalization of Boston’s commercial districts. E-mail correspondence with Stephen Gilman confirmed that in 2007, 440 jobs and 100 new businesses were created; 10 businesses were expanded; 45 storefronts were improved; 103 businesses received one-on-one technical assistance, and over 600 businesses received assistance in general. In addition, 128 events were held and volunteers contributed 15,836 hours of work. While such statistics alone are impressive, it is also important to note the trickle down effect of these improvements. Thriving economies increase the quality of life of communities by keeping money local and creating jobs and incomes for neighbors as well as by creating centers that help residents, merchants, and workers get to know and trust each other through community events (Haber and Seidman, 2005).

In Solutions for America: Boston Main Street program Final Report, Seidman observed that while the Boston Main Streets staff provides critical technical assistance and consulting services, the strong link to city hall can be both an asset and a challenge as local districts are often seen as city agencies as opposed to non-profits. He recommends more inter-agency cooperation as responsiveness to Main Street concerns vary, and when the city facilities or infrastructure are not in good condition it is difficult to convince business owners to make their own improvements to enhance the district. He also observed the need for greater information sharing among the districts and that training and assistance tends to be focused on the initial start-up phase but should also be geared more towards community organizing and long-term organization building.

The challenges of Boston Main Streets were highlighted by Hideo Sakamoto (1999) in his thesis exploring the link between socioeconomic topography and economic development. He cited the lack of power of the Main Street directors to allocate resources, select business tenants and to have authority over business or property owners. Non-economic factors, such as crime and public infrastructure issues affect the shopping districts but these cannot be controlled by the organization. Finally, he observes that on the struggles of local districts dealing with a shortage of volunteers, fundraising difficulties, and limited initiative among stakeholders, some neighborhoods may be better off focusing on other neighborhood development rather than Main Streets.

Case studies of local implementation confirm Dane’s (1996) observation that organization is one of the most critical components for urban Main Street districts. In a study of Washington Gateway Main Streets, Strong and Stroud (2002) indicate that because compliance with Main Streets is voluntary it is critical to create a shared vision by involving as many people and local organizations as possible to obtain support and create capacity for revitalization. Prior to Main Street designation, a taskforce was developed to act as the vehicle for the community-wide master planning process. De la Torre (2005) also emphasizes early organization as crucial component to Hyde/Jackson Square Main Streets (HJSM). Prior to creating HJSM local leaders took steps to assure that they understood the needs and priorities
of the all the community’s stakeholders through well promoted and organized focus groups. The focus groups helped to build trust while working towards a common goal and allowed the leadership to create an action-oriented board. Through this bottom-up process they were able to identify the area’s “movers and shakers” who served a key role in the revitalization efforts.

Despite the above described difficulties, in a case study of three local Boston districts, Seidman (2004) found improvements in the overall district, local capacity, and business performance in all three neighborhoods. He concluded that it takes about 10-15 years of sustained effort to successfully revitalize a neighborhood. Because of the lengthy process, neighborhood Main Street districts need to make a concerted effort to undertake community organizing and community building while also working on short-term projects. The more successful districts targeted large, prominent, and critically located buildings for renovation, integrated technical assistance into their program, and undertook extensive outreach, organizing and consensus building among key stakeholder groups. He highlights the Hyde Square Main Street as a best practice with the executive director making a special effort to individually meet with property owners in the district to obtain their crucial support. Five effective practices for local organizations for success are presented by Seidman: (1) sustained leadership and communication; (2) effective Main Street directors are active and visible both within their neighborhoods and in building relationships at city and regional level; (3) property owners and developers are key stakeholders to recruit and involve in the mission; (4) reaching out across all socioeconomic and ethnic populations requires special efforts and new strategies; and (5) engaging merchants is central to Main Street’s success and requires special efforts and tailoring activities.

CONCLUSION
Although not without weaknesses, Boston Main Streets presents a seasoned strategy for neighborhoods to employ to achieve commercial revitalization. In addition to the ready-made framework and assistance provided by the Nation Main Street Center, Boston Main Streets provides substantial training and consulting services, as well as significant promotional and collaborative tools. While Main Street districts housed under the city of Boston umbrella have such advantages, the above case studies highlight the potential pitfalls that can arise during local implementation. In our next section we will examine these issues more thoroughly.
CHAPTER VI:
LOCAL MAIN STREET
DISTRICTS INTERVIEWS

INTRODUCTION
In an effort to learn more about the implementation of the Main Street approach at the local level, we conducted interviews with nine executive directors from a number of Boston Main Streets districts. Each of the nineteen districts was contacted by both email and phone multiple times, but interviews were only completed with Mission Hill, East Boston, West Roxbury, St. Marks, Four Corners, Fields Corner, Upham’s Corner, Washington Gateway, and Hyde Park. A list of the interviewees and the questions asked can be found in the Appendix. In the following sections we will summarize our key findings, highlight the major themes that emerged from the interviews, and conclude with a brief look at the implementation possibilities in Mattapan.

KEY FINDINGS
A few key themes can be derived from our interviews with local Main Street districts:

- Funding will be a challenge - While the Boston Main Streets Foundation has been a welcome resurgence of capital, many executive directors spend the majority of their time trying to secure funding from businesses, grants, events, etc. One specific obstacle is competing with other non-profits that work with issues that are more immediate or ‘warm and fuzzy’ than neighborhood revitalization. Another challenge is that small business owners may not have the money to donate or may not be convinced of the benefits of working with Main Streets.

- Reliance upon volunteers - This reliance was considered both a strength and a weakness. One executive director mentioned that volunteers are more enthusiastic than employees, plus you have the freedom to decide “what do we want to do in our neighborhood?” Meanwhile another cites the particular difficulties of recruiting volunteers in low-income communities.

- Lack of leadership/overcoming past issues - For the neighborhoods of Upham’s Corner and Fields Corner, periods of stagnation or poor leadership have left the present Main Street district having to spend time overcoming the community's distrust in the abilities of the organization. A key ingredient to overcoming this is an executive director with a strong, visible presence in the community.

- Collaboration with organizations - Working with local organizations that complement the mission can be very advantageous, but Main Streets must remain focused on economic development.

- Outreach to the business community is challenging - Convincing business owners and property owners to be active participants in Main Streets will require special efforts. In walking the streets and making personal contact, collaborating with business organizations, hosting networking breakfasts or providing advertising can help pull business owners in.

- Public safety - Nearly all the Main Street districts mentioned the need to have a strong collaboration with the police department in the area.

- Small things can be a big challenge - Because the Main Street programs are typically run by one person, simple tasks can become complicated. Issues of having to send mailings to two zip codes or simply conducting a survey (when the local population speaks five different languages) become quite difficult.

- Stick to the mission while making visible improvements - Local districts need to focus on visible projects - such as cultural events or store improvements, while also working towards the overall goal of district revitalization. The community must see that the executive director is out there doing things. Establishing a strong relationship with the media was highlighted as a key tool.

MAJOR THEMES
For the most part, the interviews solidified many findings presented in the previous chapter. Most interviewees talked about the difficulties of reaching out to merchants and the challenge of fundraising. For a few districts, the demographics of the population or historical conflicts posed challenges while others were able to capitalize by working with community organizations. Nearly every interview echoed the importance of keeping community support by making visible improvements. Long-term projects can be successful but only if they stay within the mission while also simultaneously working on smaller, visible initiatives. For a few districts, the location and demographics of the neighborhood, such as East Boston, West Roxbury, and Washington Gateway may not be applicable to Mattapan. While this may be the case, there still emerged several themes that were consistent throughout the interviews.
**Overall Organization and Mission**

From the interviews the flexibility of the implementation of the Main Streets approach became apparent. While the overarching goal of each district was to revitalize the business district, the methods to accomplish this vary greatly. While some districts focus on large-scale development, others stick to storefront improvements, and still others on business networking, business retention, or are still trying to find their niche. All of the Main Streets play a significant role acting as a liaison between the city of Boston and the local businesses. They assist with the permitting process, write letters of support for licenses, and direct businesses on where to go for additional resources. The degree to which they are involved in the recruitment of businesses varies, but they all act as a clearinghouse for information regarding business services.

A few local districts had an additional committee such as public safety, elder-friendly, or sub-committees focused on specific projects. Some of the districts were lucky enough to have a part-time staff member or an intern to help, but many were running as one-person shops. Quite a few districts had difficulties recruiting committee members for all four “points,” which has led some of these committees to become inactive. In terms of recruiting and retaining volunteers for committees, a few executive directors mentioned the keys to their success were consistency and professionalism. Strategies taken from the interviews include sending email reminders about the meetings and then following up with a phone call, starting meetings on time, staying focused on the agenda, making sure there are “take aways” and following up with minutes on the following day.

Zachary Cohen of Upham’s Corner also emphasized the importance of having a diverse group of people representing the whole community on the board of directors and committees. They are currently facing the New School versus Old School conflict, but he is working to get membership from the entire community, including from the lower-income members. To bring people with special skills on board, he contacted the Boston Society of Architecture to find out whether there were any architects in their zip code and then asked them to join the Design Committee.

The need for more education was echoed by Shelley Goehring of Four Corners. It has presented a problem with their large development projects. She stated, “If I could go back, what I would have started with was a couple of years just trying to find more education within the community. We don’t have urban planners, etc within the community to speak on this...why is an anchor and foot traffic important? People outside [planning] don’t understand these things...but if you have people in the community that are experts, they can speak on the same level.” She pointed out that other programs, such as St. Marks Main Streets, may have had greater success because they have a core group who understands development. They know, for example, that density can be a good thing.

**Membership Structure**

In terms of membership programs there was a broad range of set-ups. The majority of districts have fee-based membership programs although a few have chosen not to be membership-based at all. Many districts reported that they had not collected dues or kept up with membership drives, and a few were just recently launching their packages. Several executive directors indicated that their membership packages did not include significant benefits and that they were looking to revamp them. Hyde Park Main Streets was touted by a number of the executive directors as the “best practice” in terms of membership programs. The Hyde Park Main Street membership package has a tiered system for businesses ranging from small to large to corporate. The businesses are allowed to “self-describe themselves” and select the level of membership or fee that they feel is appropriate. Hyde Park has had an average of 100 businesses. Resident membership, however, has ebbed and flowed with only 50 members last year. In the past, membership has ranged between 100-250 members. Executive Director Patrice Latozi is currently investigating ways to increase the benefits of resident membership.

“If I could go back, what I would have started with was a couple of years just trying to find more education within the community. We don’t have urban planners, etc within the community to speak on this...why is an anchor and foot traffic important? People outside [planning] don’t understand these things...but if you have people in the community that are experts, they can speak on the same level.”

**Collaboration with Local Organizations**

The consensus within the interviews was that community organizations are a great asset as long as there does not exist a history of conflict. According to the Fields Corner Main Street Executive Director, Evelyn Darling, the area is plagued by issues of “turf wars.” The civic group leaders have all grown up in the neighborhood, and there are some long-standing disputes. This has been coupled by the volatile history of the Fields Corner Main Street program, which was dormant for many years and essentially restarted in 2005. Darling’s approach is to “to meet with all groups, to go out to all of them, include all of them in their communications, but not to be seen as allied with anyone group. It is difficult.” On the other side of the spectrum, Shelley Goehring of Four Corners Main Streets cites the lack of civic organizations in her area as a weakness. One of her greatest challenges is taking on too much. When you have very few organizations there is a tendency
to expect more from Main Streets. To Goerhing, “Many community orga-
nizations is a positive. It makes things more complicated--but it is a huge
benefit.” Four Corners has not been as good at recruiting residents, and she
feels having neighborhood organizations could really help.

St. Mark’s Main Street (SMMS) has been quite successful in working with
community organizations. Executive Director Dan Larner listed one of the
greatest strengths of his program is its ability to get the people in the neigh-
borhood involved and to take an interest in the business district. Larner
attends each group’s meeting 1-2 times per year in addition to keeping in
regular contact with each. He did note that it helps that in the St. Mark’s
neighborhood, the civic organizations all get along relatively well. SMMS
has focused on large-development projects along Dorchester Avenue. An
executive director of a nearby district highlighted the geographic advantage
of SMSS’s development projects. The territory of each community group
in St. Mark’s borders Dorchester Avenue. This means that no one group
“owns” the territory where the major development projects are taking place.

“Many community organizations is a positive. It makes
things more complicated--but it is a huge benefit.”

Linda Rubin Royer, the new executive director of Washington Gateway
Main Streets, contends that the eight neighborhood groups in her area have
been assets. “I can learn stuff from [our local organizations], I learn what
is important to them…but we have to remember that we are an economic
development organization, and we are pro-business.” The importance of
remaining close to the mission was echoed by Clark Moulaison, Execu-
tive Director of East Boston Main Streets who warns, “Along may come a
children’s organization…and your Main Streets decides to help. You should
support them but don’t take away from your mission. Stay focused on the
commercial district, promoting local business, etc. Main Streets does have
its limitations.” The need to choose a simple mission and commit to it was
echoed by many of the directors. As Main Streets is a comprehensive ap-
proach there is a danger in it focusing on projects beyond its scope.

Getting the Business Community on Board

A significant struggle for many districts was convincing business owners to
participate in Main Streets. Some executive directors felt it was a cultural
issue -- while a storefront may seem shabby to one business owner, to
another it was okay, so there was no motivation to make improvements.
Other executive directors felt the lack of buy-in is the result of the business
owners being focused on surviving today and not seeing the bigger picture
and how their contribution to Main Streets could help them in the long term.

A common perception that does not help with bringing business owners
on board is the idea that the executive directors are city employees out to

report them for infractions. Business owners do not always understand that
the Main Street districts are separate non-profit entities. Almost all of the
executive directors reported that this issue occurs in their neighborhoods
and almost all confirmed that they had never reported a business to city’s
Department of Inspectional Services, or if they had, it was a rarity.

When asked how they try to break down such a barrier, nearly all cited the
need the need to be “visible and on the ground.” Many talked about how
they spend time just walking the streets, saying hello and getting to know the
businesses. They list this as one of the most important steps towards
bringing businesses on board. Zachary Cohen of Upham’s Corner said, “I
spent the first six months going door-to-door, talking with business owners.
Find out what they are doing, what they need. You can tell if they don’t like
you and then that is when you really need to concentrate on them. If you
listen then they will turn around. For the first six months you are just listen-
ing and not doing anything.”

Other tactics to bring businesses on board include offering promotion along
with business membership. If businesses become a member of the Hyde
Park Main Streets, the Executive Director Patrice Latozi will write an article
about them in their monthly newsletter or post something on the website.
While in the past they have used a directory to promote businesses, there is
not enough funding this year. Instead, she is putting an ad in the Shopper,
which goes out to 11,000 homes thanking each of her business members.

Business networking events have been another successful tool used in
Hyde Park, East Boston and Upham’s Corner. Hyde Park Main Streets
hosts monthly business networking breakfasts year-round, except for two
months in the summer. Upham’s Corner Main Streets recently began host-
ing business networking breakfasts. They are held bi-monthly and often
have speakers that discuss development projects in the area. The num-
ber of businesses has grown from 24 to 70, and Mayor Menino has even
attended. East Boston Main Streets (EBMS) has also held six networking
events in collaboration with the chamber of commerce. Over 125 busi-
nesses participated in addition to local police, state representatives, and
city councilors. They gave the business owners a survey and had a brain-
storming session. Moulaison commented, “It was a great success because
we invited everyone in and just said, ‘what’s on your mind?’.” The events
led EBMS to help individual businesses with some small problems, which
allowed them to show that they can take direct action that leads to visible
results.

Long-Term Projects vs. Short Winds

Many of the districts have had success with large-scale development proj-
ects. Washington Gateway Main Street has been heralded as having played
a pivotal role in the transformation of the South End with its involvement
in the beautification of buildings, historical preservation, street art, and the development of the silver line. St. Mark’s Main Streets (SMSS) has also had great success with major development initiatives. Executive Director Larner contends that the redevelopment of the Ashmont MBTA station would not have occurred without SMSS. The organization was also responsible for holding a series of public charrettes that led to the redevelopment of Peabody Square. SMSS has been attained significant results, but in the meantime, it has spent a lot of time on talking to people, holding promotions to get people shopping and collaborating with Fields Corner Main Streets on events such as “Martinis on the Avenue”.

Four Corners Main Streets, on the other hand, has struggled more with long-term projects. It is currently working to implement its “urban village concept plan,” which encourages denser development in two commercial nodes. The concept plan is based on results of several community meetings. While plans are moving forward successfully, it has come at a price. Four Corners’ Goehring said, “At first I focused on little things, like getting six trash cans. That was an accomplishment. I got warned to do small winds. It was overwhelming being so small and not having a volunteer base. I had a difficult time balancing the small things and the bigger picture. I focused on the bigger picture, and I lost people.”

Evelyn Darling of Fields Corner Main Streets confirmed the need for a gradual progression. She warns that many Main Streets focus only on big plans. When she started off, she did a major event, “Taste of Fields Corner,” and it was too large of an undertaking. Instead, she suggests focusing on strengthening the volunteer base, getting the committees together, building a website and getting a logo. Similar sentiments were echoed by Zachary Cohen of Upham’s Corner Main Streets, who is currently working on “branding” for his district. He contends that determining what Upham’s concept plan,” which encourages denser development in two commercial nodes. The concept plan is based on results of several community meetings. While plans are moving forward successfully, it has come at a price. Four Corners’ Goehring said, “At first I focused on little things, like getting six trash cans. That was an accomplishment. I got warned to do small winds. It was overwhelming being so small and not having a volunteer base. I had a difficult time balancing the small things and the bigger picture. I focused on the bigger picture, and I lost people.”

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Impact of Main Streets
While the interviews highlighted primarily the obstacles and challenges, the executive directors all implied that Main Streets had made an impact on their communities. In addition to storefront improvements and the creation of new businesses and jobs, there have also been intangible benefits. One executive director contended that the impact depends on how one measures success. “[Main Streets] has been able to create a lot of investment that would not have happened here. Some of the energy and projects have contributed to the overall community. [We] have not been successful with facades. Larger commercial projects have been a huge challenge. But when you look at the big picture it is worth it…. [Main Streets] brings all the different stakeholders together-- business owners, property owners, the city, the corporate world. Realistically, you have to have all those voices at the table when you talk about commercial revitalization.” The interviews with the various executive directors have indicated that while certainly not without challenges, Main Streets has the potential to impact commercial districts.

IMPLEMENTATION IN MATTAPAN
For those local executive directors who were familiar with Mattapan, it was almost unanimous that a Main Streets would likely be most successful in Mattapan Square as opposed to Morton Village. Mattapan Square was cited as a ‘gateway’ and already has the businesses and pedestrian traffic necessary to sustain the program. Even if there is not the best mix of businesses, people still shop there. The existing businesses could allow for more visible change in the short term. Morton Village, in contrast, lacks a strong pool of businesses and would require building the commercial district almost from the ground-up.

CONCLUSION
While the Main Streets approach has worked in other local districts, it is important the Mattapan Community Development Corporation evaluate if the program is right for Mattapan. Main Streets is not a panacea, and improvement will not occur overnight, particularly in Morton Village. Evidence indicates that Main Streets can positively impact neighborhoods. What is not clear is whether the approach is the correct path for Mattapan. Mattapan has several assets in its favor: a strong commercial district in Mattapan Square, a large number of community organizations, future planned transit-oriented development in Morton Village, and the apparent support for a new Main Street program from the city of Boston.

There are, however, also some obstacles in Mattapan. Chief among them is the historic lack of support for Main Streets, particularly within the Mattapan Board of Trade. If the plans go forth in Morton Village the lack of businesses and pedestrian foot traffic in this area will make implementation difficult. It is essential that before the Mattapan Community Development Corporation moves forward that it assesses the degree of support within the community to determine if a Main Streets district is, in fact, the best framework to achieve economic revitalization.
CHAPTER VII: RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous chapters, we have provided a description of the Mattapan neighborhood both from the perspective of businesses as well as from residents and local organizations. We have outlined the major principles behind Main Streets and analyzed its strengths and weaknesses based on a literature review, previous case studies of Boston Main Streets, and interviews with local districts. We will now outline some general recommendations for the future prospects for a Mattapan Square or Morton Village Main Streets in addition to policy implications and areas of recommended future research. We will conclude the report with some final thoughts for the Mattapan Community Development Corporation.

Before we present our recommendations, it is important to note the limitations to our methodology. First, we had only three months to gather information and conduct outreach with the community and local districts. Second, we were unable to secure the cooperation of more than half of the local Main Street districts, so the information from our interviews is based off of a limited number of districts. The short-time frame led us to conduct broad interviews rather than thorough case studies of the various districts. Third, a last minute location change for our focus group may have contributed to a low turnout of less than ten residents. As such, the results from this focus group may not be representative of the entire community. Lastly, as we gathered information it has become clear that the Community Implementation Team under the MEDI initiative is working on producing similar recommendations regarding the location and implementation of a Main Street program. As such, our report aims to synthesize the current efforts and provide general recommendations as opposed to a detailed analysis of the specific commercial districts in question.

POTENTIAL LOCATIONS

A Main Street program connecting Morton Village and Blue Hill Avenue is currently being considered by the Mattapan Community Development Corporation (MCDC). From our interviews it appears that this location has been selected because the Morton Board of Commerce is eager to facilitate with the implementation, whereas the Mattapan Board of Trade is opposed to a Main Street program in Mattapan Square. From interviews with local business owners, however, it is unclear whether the Mattapan Board of Trade truly represents the interests of its members. Some local business owners expressed a desire to support a Main Street program. Our research in this area is limited, and we recommend that MCDC fully evaluate the pros and cons of each district before selecting Morton Village officially. It may be necessary to ascertain the exact level of business support in each commercial node as well as which location has more public support. Below we briefly highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each district for housing a Main Street program.

Mattapan Square is the most natural location for a first attempt at Main Streets in Mattapan. It has a stronger base of businesses, and it is already a vibrant commercial district, although in need of façade improvements and a better retail mix. If selected, the vision for a Mattapan Square Main Streets would likely focus on physical improvements, business retention, and diversifying the retail options. A challenge for Mattapan Square is that the business owners and the Mattapan Board of Trade are viewed as being opposed to any efforts for improvement, particularly that of Main Streets. Residents in the focus groups saw Mattapan Square business owners as not being “community people” and thus, unlikely to be willing to participate in efforts to improve this commercial node.

Morton Village lacks a strong commercial base and does not have as much pedestrian foot traffic. As such, the vision for this node would be creating a business district and building local capacity. Although a more challenging vision, there is much future development planned through MEDI in the Morton Village area that will help revitalize the area. A Main Streets in this commercial node could provide a mechanism for community members and business owners to play a role in the upcoming development. A key issue for Morton Village would be maintaining community support during the long development process. A major ally, however, is the Morton Street Board of Commerce, which appears eager to assist with implementation and has a group of business owners committed to improving the area and the overall vision of Main Streets.

The need for long-term development in Morton Village will be especially challenging. It will be imperative that the future executive director focus on small projects, such as cultural events or storefront improvements, while also working to keep the community engaged with the long-term development objectives. A key to success will be keeping the community involved throughout the process. If this area is selected, the Mattapan Community Development Corporation should start by hosting a community forum to develop a vision for the Main Streets, similar to Four Corners’ “urban village” plan. During the community meetings, it should be made clear that development could take up to ten years so that unattainable expectations can be avoided.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A significant challenge for Mattapan may be obtaining community support for the Main Street program. Mattapan has unsuccessfully applied for Main Street designation at least two previous times. Each time the application was rejected by Boston Main Streets because of a lack of community support. Thus far, the only players in the current decision to move forward with the Main Street program have been through the MEDI Community Implementation Team, whose members were appointed by the Boston Re-
development Authority. What has yet to occur is outreach to residents and business owners to determine if they would support a Main Street program.

It is unclear if the Main Street program is being proposed because of MEDI or because it is something the community truly wants. As it is a volunteer-based, grassroots organization, regardless of MCDC or MEDI support, a Main Street program will not be viable without at least a core group of committed citizens. Selecting this core group should result from a bottom-up process, rather than selection by the city of Boston. A possible model to emulate is Hyde/Jackson Square Main Streets and its use of focus groups to identify the “movers and shakers” within the community. MCDC should make a concerted effort to include leaders from across the community and ethnic groups and to make sure the planning process for Main Streets has broad-based involvement and is not controlled by the city of Boston.

Conducting community meetings and the aforementioned focus groups will help to develop a needs assessment, allowing MCDC to determine what the commercial needs of the community are and where the future Main Streets should focus. MCDC should give presentations to various civic groups and merchant associations, hold community meetings, and walk the streets talking to individual property and business owners to obtain their support.

Convincing business owners that Main Streets will work for them and not against them will be a challenge. The earlier this communication process begins, the better. In West Roxbury, Main Street activists had businesses affix stickers on their window indicating their support for the program. A similar measure could help build visible support for the program in Mattapan and perhaps lead other business owners to follow. Reaching out to other Main Streets executive directors and asking them to give presentations with business and property owners from their community could also help to clarify the mission of the program.

HOUSING THE MAIN STREETS
We recommend that the future Main Street program be housed within the Mattapan Community Development Corporation for at least a few years. This would allow the program to share resources with MCDC while it establishes itself. A potential collaboration could exist with the small business development center that MCDC is currently developing. If these two organizations are housed together, more centralized services for business owners could be provided without the Main Street program overextending staff and resources. It is necessary, however, that Mattapan Main Streets remain a separate entity and not become simply another facet of MCDC. One challenge with this approach will be overcoming community perceptions of MCDC. Residents in our focus group expressed concerns over significant turn-over in the past within the organization. Being the force behind Main Streets is an excellent opportunity for Mattapan Community Development Corporation to highlight its new direction.

APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED FROM INTERVIEWS/CASE STUDIES
Based upon the information from the interviews, reports, and case studies, the following outlines key steps for the future Main Street program regardless of its location:

• Establish strong and visible leadership: Hire a strong executive director and recruit a broad-based group of residents, property owners, business owners, and members of local non-profits, institutions, and community organizations to serve on the board and committees.

• Focus on organization in the initial phase: In the first six months work exclusively on building upon the organizational base. Establish committees and ensure the executive director is on the streets, building a rapport with business owners.

• Branding: What is Mattapan Main Streets? Develop a simple mission statement and create a distinct logo.

• Leverage the asset of existing community organizations: Recruit members to join committees, but make clear what the specific mission of Main Streets is to avoid conflicting goals.

• Utilize city’s consulting services: Use services to conduct a market analysis and to help create a website. Conduct market analysis in combination with results of focus groups to determine what businesses are needed in Mattapan.

• Determine through initial focus groups what type of membership program would work best for Mattapan: If fee-based, develop a solid benefits package to entice both businesses and residents to join.

• Emphasis on outreach: Focus early on reaching out to property owners and developers to show how they can benefit from the program.

• Make a special effort to pull in business owners: Collaborate with business associations, offer promotional services, and host community events that bring people into the stores.

• Follow-up once organizational phase is complete: Host promotional events highlighting the various cultural groups in Mattapan.
to market the distinct nature of the district. An example event could be a “Taste of Mattapan”.

- Balance Main Streets to the needs of the community: Consider a sub-committee for public safety, gentrification, or transit-oriented development. Depending on the number of volunteers, adding committees may be disadvantageous in which case one of the original four committees could instead focus on these issues.

- Take results from the community planning phase to develop a strategic plan that is two-fold: Short-term visible change and overall long-term vision for the district

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
Information collected during this report indicates that while the Main Street Four Point Approach is being applied with varying degrees of success, it can be a challenging framework to implement. This can be particularly true in urban communities that lack the volunteer base and have greater ethnic and economic diversity. While it is a relatively flexible framework, staffing all four committees can be challenging. The National Main Street Center should consider allowing communities to adapt the program to their specific needs. In addition, the primary analytical tool to measure the success of Main Streets has been economic statistics. More research is needed to evaluate both non-economic contributions of Main Streets as well as how and why programs fail. The National Main Street Center should review program outputs and conduct a formative evaluation to determine how the different elements of the approach are working together.

Our interviews indicate that each of the local Boston districts is implementing the Main Street program in a unique way. Yet certain issues such as funding and reliance upon volunteers appear common in many districts. The topic of information-sharing arose in a few interviews, suggesting that it may also be helpful for the districts to learn more about what each is doing. In addition to the monthly meetings, more collaboration or improved communication among the districts may be advantageous as it would allow the executive directors to learn from and assist each other.

SUGGESTED FUTURE RESEARCH
Alternatives to Main Streets
If community support for a Main Streets is infeasible or designation is denied by Boston Main Streets for a third time, we recommend pursuing a Business Improvement District (BID). This is where property owners representing 75% of the property value within a commercial district vote to assess themselves a tax that funds services beyond the basic city amenities. Working through a board of directors the programs implement many of the Main Street principles while providing a stable funding source for staffing and organizational initiatives. The legally binding entity would need legislative approval to be effective in Mattapan Square and would allow the various commercial nodes to plan collectively for their own development. A BID revitalized New York’s Times Square and could facilitate the formation of new partnerships in Mattapan. It could also present to the Mattapan Board of Trade (MBT) a measure of the local control that it does not want to give to the city through a Main Street program. In the process, MBT will demonstrate to the community its commitment to local growth and expansion and dispel the grumblings about its allegiance to the Square’s absentee landlords. It is important to note that attempts at a BID in Downtown Crossing have been unsuccessful in the past so further research regarding its potential is necessary.

Alternatively, in addition to a Main Streets and a BID, the Mattapan Community Development Corporation could also consider simply launching a program that applies the principles of Main Streets without the name. Mattapan stakeholders such as MCDC could create a coalition comprised of representatives from all of the commercial nodes, including River Street with its cluster of businesses. Working collaboratively, a representative sample of businesses from all of Mattapan’s commercial nodes can create a grassroots “blueprint” for the area’s commercial success. The concept of using the principles of Main Streets without the name is currently being applied by the city of Providence, Rhode Island, through its Neighborhood Markets initiative. The municipality overtly acknowledges that it bases its approach on the Main Streets concept. It would also be an exciting opportunity for observers to learn from such a partnership between MCDC and the businesses within its community.

Greater Participatory Planning
Mattapan is at a crucial point in terms of development. It is one of the few neighborhoods left in Boston with significant land available for development. With the city in the process of implementing MEDI, it is clear that major changes in the community are on the horizon. The Mattapan Community Development Corporation has the opportunity to become a lead voice in the future of Mattapan. A reoccurring theme from our discussions with residents was the perception that they have no voice in the development process. MCDC should investigate ways to incorporate more participatory planning. A potential model to consider is the Roxbury Master Plan, developed between 1999 and 2003.

Through a series of focus groups and community meetings, a master plan was developed by the community to guide decision making regarding neighborhood revitalization. The Roxbury Master Plan was adopted by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan

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Oversight Committee was also established to ensure that future development adheres to the plan. Roxbury provides a model for other Boston neighborhoods for showing that residents can develop visions that determine how economic development can benefit all societal groups (Jennings 2004). The creation of a master plan is a complicated process and just one example of participatory planning. Such a route may not be appropriate for Mattapan, but increasing the level of participatory planning in this neighborhood would bring greater legitimacy to future development in the eyes of the community.

LESSONS FOR MATTAPAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Through reaching out to the community it is easy to assess that the Mattapan Community Development Corporation has community connections to Mattapan and a reputation in the neighborhood. Interviews conducted demonstrate a historical apprehension in trusting MCDC to carry out its agenda. Mattapan residents participating in our focus group clearly defined the problem as one of “over promising, and under delivering.” When questioned about this identified problem, many residents commented that turnover and lack of resources was the major problem. On a positive note, a finite amount of community members were aware of MCDC, though some were unclear about its mission and goals for the community.

As a keynote member of the Mattapan community wanting to convene and lead a grassroots effort for a Main Street program in Mattapan, gaining the trust of Mattapan’s constituencies is mandatory. The extent to which an organizer can influence the actions of a community will depend on how well he is trusted by its members (Kahn 1970). Consistent disappointment by MCDC in the eyes of some has illegitimatized MCDC’s capacity as an organizing body. However, the introduction of new leadership within MCDC over the past two years, and the constant search for empowerment in the neighborhood of Mattapan, provides ample opportunity for community leadership.

The Main Street Program is largely dependent on community support. The evidence that community support exists for a Main Streets is abundant in most social and civic settings in Mattapan. However, the organization needed to make this happen is lacking. By gaining the trust of the community, a base of power will be established (Smock 2004). MCDC can utilize this newly-established trust to mobilize grassroots support for a Main Streets. However, establishing trust between the community and MCDC is the most important objective.

As dependent as a Main Streets effort is on community backing and support, a successful Main Street program also depends on community volunteerism once established. However, first public support needs to be built. MCDC can achieve fervent support behind a Main Streets by addressing community themes with the tenets of the Main Street program. For example, the themes of youth engagement identified in interviews by community members as problematic are pregnable by the Main Street program. MCDC should highlight that several established Main Street programs include Public Safety Committees that work with local law enforcement to improve economic and social climates of communities.

To address the issue of youth engagement, MCDC has already established the Adolescent Wellness Program, a voter registration program, and is partnering with Harvard University’s Black Student Association to implement after school programs for grades first through fourth. However, these programs are little known throughout the community. Not once were these programs a topic of conversation during the community outreach portion of this project. It is important to advertise these programs well. This will be advantageous in gaining support for a Main Street program because it demonstrates commitment to the community. Leading a community requires demonstrated commitment and accomplishment, both of which create trust (Twelvetrees 1989).

Cultural identity is an important emotional component of Mattapan, evident by the strong support of community members for the Haitian and African communities. While it is apparent through its Strategic Report 2007 that MCDC identifies with the importance of participating in community events, there is little recognition for the need of cultural events. MCDC should organize and sponsor a cultural event to reach out to certain large ethnicities with Mattapan’s community. Sponsoring a “Taste of Haiti” event or a “Taste of Mattapan” event will create good relations between the neighborhood of Mattapan and MCDC. Addressing this community theme through Main Streets is also possible.

CONCLUSION

Utilizing the assets of the community is important going forward. Many residents and community organizations are looking for a unified voice in Mattapan, someone or something representing their interests. By addressing the recommendations above, MCDC can be this entity. It is also important to take an inclusive approach to leading. Holding community breakfasts and providing updates on the status of projects periodically is appropriate. However, MCDC should not limit itself to these meetings when trying to build support for a Main Street program. Extensive outreach allowing the community to voice its concerns about the prospects of a Main Street program to Mattapan Community Development Corporation is critical.

Mattapan stakeholders—its residents, civic organizations, business owners, workers, and more—want input on its “visioning” discussions. MCDC can provide or be the forum for these conversations. If it successfully guides
this process it can ensure that the vision of all stakeholders is incorporated in the community’s ultimate action plan.

**APPENDICES:**

**LIST OF MAIN STREETS INTERVIEWS**

Stephen Gilman, Acting Director of Boston Main Streets  
In person interview on March 10, 2008

Christine Rose, Executive Director of Mission Hill Main Streets  
In person interview on March 3, 2008

Clark Mouaison, Executive Director of East Boston Main Streets  
Phone interview on March 4, 2008

Kelly Tynan, Executive Director of West Roxbury Main Streets  
Phone interview on March 13, 2008

Dan Larner, St. Marks, Executive Director of St. Mark Main Streets  
In person interview on March 11, 2008

Shelley Goerhling, Executive Director of Four Corner Main Streets  
Phone interview on March 19, 2008

Evelyn Darling, Executive Director of Fields Corner Main Streets  
Phone interview on March 21, 2008

Zachary Cohen, Executive Director of Upham’s Corner Main Streets  
Phone interview on March 21, 2008

Linda Rubin-Royer, Executive Director Washington Gateway Main Streets  
Phone interview on March 21, 2008

Patrice Latozi, Executive Director Hyde Park Main Streets  
Phone interview on March 24, 2008

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL BOSTON MAIN STREETS DISTRICTS**

1) How long have you been involved with Main Streets?

2) What activities is your Main Street district involved with?

3) Can you please describe the membership structure of your organization?  
   Is it member-based? How many business and resident members do you have?

4) Can you please tell me about the make-up of your committees and the board of directors?

5) Can you please describe your relationship with Boston Main Streets?

6) What is the ethnic breakdown of your community and how does that play a role with Main Streets?

7) What are your strategies for reaching out to the business community?

8) What sets your main street program apart from the others in Boston?

9) What is your relationship with other community organizations in the neighborhood?

10) Is there a board of trade in your area? If so, what is their relationship with Main Streets?

11) In what areas has your program been most successful? And in what areas has it been least successful?

12) What do you think makes a good location for Main Streets?

13) Are you familiar with Mattapan? Do you think Morton or Mattapan Sq is a better location?

14) What are the biggest strengths of Main Streets? What are the weaknesses?

15) If you could go back and start over with the Main Street program what would you do differently?

16) What advice would you have for the new executive director of a Mattapan Main Streets?

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN TUFTS UNIVERSITY FIELD PROJECTS TEAM NO. 7 AND MATTAPAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

I. Introduction

Project number: 7  
Project title: Building a Better Business Model for a Successful Main Street Program in Mattapan Square
Client: Mattapan Community Development Corporation

This Memorandum of Understanding summarizes the scope of work, work product(s) and deliverables, timeline, work processes and methods, and lines of authority, supervision and communication relating to the Field Project identified above (the “Project”), as agreed to between (i) the UEP graduate students enrolled in the Field Projects and Planning course (UEP-255) offered by the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning who are identified in Section II(1) below (the “Field Projects Team”); (ii) Ryan Fattman, Kara Hubbard and Nathalie Jean, further identified in Section II(2) below (the “Client”); and (iii) UEP, as represented by Prof. Justin Hollander directly involved in teaching the Course during the spring 2008 semester.

II. Specific Provisions

(1) The Field Projects Team working on the Project consists of the following individuals:

1. Ryan Fattman
   email address: fattman4sutton@gmail.com

2. Kara Hubbard
   email address: Kara.Hubbard@tufts.edu

3. Nathalie Jean
   email address: njeansa@yahoo.com

(2) The Client’s contact information is as follows:

Client name: Mattapan Community Development Corporation
Key contact/ supervisor: Shawn T. Webb
Email address: ______________________________
Telephone number: ______________________________
FAX number: ______________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________________________
Web site: ______________________________

(3) The goal of the Project is:
To create a final report that makes recommendations to the Mattapan Community Development Corporation for the development of a successful Main Street business model.

(4) The methods and processes through which the Field Projects Team intends to achieve these goals are:

1. Surveys
2. Geographic mapping
3. Community and business outreach
4. Research and analysis
5. Inventory of businesses and neighborhood associations
6. Exploring social networking options

(5) The work products and deliverables of the Project are:

New Business Development and Outreach
1. Analyze new business development possibilities
2. Inventory current business community
3. Create blueprint for business outreach program in Mattapan

Neighborhood Mapping
1. Identify cultural, community and social trends in Mattapan
2. Map the business district, including an inventory of registered and operating businesses in Mattapan

Community Connections
1. Explore opportunities to engage younger Mattapan residents, possibly through social networking and community events
2. Present ideas on how to connect and bridge cultural divides between different demographic groups

(6) The anticipated project timeline (with dates anticipated for key deliverables) is:

Feb. 5: First of a series of monthly update meetings
Feb. 6: MOU signing by team and client
May: Final presentation of report
Available to meet with Mattapan CDC on as needed basis

(7) The lines of authority, supervision and communication between the Client and the Field Projects Team are (or will be determined as follows):

• No organized team hierarchy
• Kara Hubbard serves as liaison for Tufts team #7 to the Mattapan CDC

(8) The understanding with regard to payment/reimbursement by the client to the Field Projects Team of any Project-related expenses is:
III. Additional Representations and Understandings

A. The Field Projects Team is undertaking the Course and the Project for academic credit and therefore compensation (other than reimbursement of Project-related expenses) may not be provided to team members.

B. Because the Course and the Project itself are part of an academic program, it is understood that the final work product and deliverables of the Project (the “Work Product”) – either in whole or in part – may and most likely will be shared with others inside and beyond the Tufts community. This may include, without limitation, the distribution of the Work Product to other students, faculty and staff, release to community groups or public agencies, general publication, and posting on the Web. Tufts University and the Field Project Team may seek and secure grant funds or similar payment to defray the cost of any such distribution or publication. It is expected that any issues involving client confidentiality or proprietary information that may arise in connection with a Project will be narrow ones that can be resolved as early in the semester as possible by discussion among the Client, the Field Projects Team and a Tufts instructor directly responsible for the Course (or his or her designee).

C. The client can use the data and research materials in the final report for future projects. However, it cannot review research data, notes and research materials used in drafting the report. The client cannot alter the text of the final report. If the client refers to the report and its authors in future projects, it cannot alter it and must credit authors Ryan Fattman, Kara Hubbard and Nathalie Jean for their contributions.

D. It is understood that this project may require the approval (either through full review or by exemption) of the Tufts University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process is not expected to interfere with timely completion of the project.

Mattapan Business Survey

Graduate students from Tufts University’s Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning program are working with the Mattapan Community Development Corporation (MCDC) on business development in Mattapan’s commercial districts. To assist them in their efforts, please fill out this survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impression of community</td>
<td>What is your general impression of Mattapan?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Please circle rating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you rate the visual/physical appearance of the area?</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you rate the current site of your business?</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you rate the overall cleanliness of the community?</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you rate parking in the community?</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the advantages to doing business in Mattapan?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Public transportation accessibility</td>
<td>Community spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the disadvantages to doing business in Mattapan?</td>
<td></td>
<td>People loitering in front of businesses</td>
<td>Business community does not work together</td>
<td>Business mix (too many convenience stores)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there eyesore buildings in the community?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Please rank and specify the top two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What would you like to see done with them?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do parking spots and signs need improvement?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Why?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What else needs improvement?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is Mattapan a safe community for conducting business?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>How can Mattapan become safer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What services or businesses would you like to see added to Mattapan?</td>
<td>Gym/fitness center</td>
<td>Bakeries</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department store or supermarket</td>
<td>Book store</td>
<td>High-end restaurant</td>
<td>Movie theater Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company information</td>
<td>For how many years have you done business in Mattapan?</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>16+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is your business type?</td>
<td>Small local store</td>
<td>Mid-sized</td>
<td>Small franchise branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you live in Mattapan?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>If yes, for how long</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If no, where do you live?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mattapan Business Survey
| **Is your business family-owned?** | □ Yes □ No |
| **Do you have a succession plan?** | □ Yes □ No |
| **If yes, please explain** | |
| **How many employees do you have?** | Full-Time ________ Part-Time ________ Youths ________ Other ________ |
| **Do you have a marketing plan?** | □ Yes □ No |
| **Do you have a business plan?** | □ Yes □ No |
| **Do you own or rent your place of business?** | Own □ Rent □ |
| **Will you be expanding or downsizing in the near future?** | Yes □ No □ Please explain ____________________________ |
| **Does your business have Internet access?** | □ Yes □ No |
| **Do you need Internet access to conduct business?** | □ Yes □ No |
| **Would you enhance your services if you were to offer Internet access to customers?** | □ Yes □ No |
| **If yes, please explain how:** | |

**Economic development**

| Are you aware of the local chamber(s) of commerce? | □ Yes □ No |
| Are you a member of it or any other small business association? | □ Yes □ No |
| Even if not a member, have you ever attended any meetings? | □ Yes □ No |
| If yes, how many? | 1-5 □ 6-10 □ 11-20 □ 21+ |

**Would you accept assistance from the local chamber of commerce or business association?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Do you know of the Matapán Community Development Corporation?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**What type of services do you believe the Matapán Community Development Corporation offers?**

| Technical assistance to small businesses | Affordable housing | Other |

**Would you be interested in using MySpace or Facebook in contact with others interested in working with the organization?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Does your business have an economic plan?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**If there is an economic plan, is it being implemented effectively?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Does the city of Houston offer adequate economic and business development?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**What are your business needs**

| Information on local networking | Consumer service programs | Website development | Retail and special event coordination |

**Association that help you?**

| □ Competitive/joint advertising with other businesses | □ Other |

**For your business to be more competitive, what type of workshops would you attend?**

| □ Retaining and attracting customers | □ Assessing and using new technologies | □ Dealing with the competition | □ Financial management | □ Product pricing | □ Other |

**What is a serious concern for the success of your business?**

| □ Business and property taxes | □ Rent and lease costs | □ Insurance | □ Cost of utilities | □ Cost of full-time employees | □ Cost of part-time employees | □ Other |

**Does your business' façade or window display draw customers?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Are you interested in attending trade shows and business networking events?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Would you accept some design and layout assistance?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Would you apply for business improvement grants?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Does the community need a business directory?**

| □ Yes □ No | |

**Your customers**

| □ Under 16 | □ 16-25 | □ 26-30 | □ 31-40 | □ 41-50 | □ 51-60 | □ 61-70 | □ 71-80 | □ 81+ |

**Are most of them from Matapán or outside the area?**

| □ Yes □ No | Approximate percentage from Matapán □ Percentage from outside Matapán |

**Will you try to reach a different demographic? Why?**

| □ Yes □ No | Please explain ____________________________ |

**About you – The business owner**

**How much time do you spend in your business? You are there:**

| Full-time | Part-Time | Drop-in basis | Other | |

**What is your revenue range?**

| $0-$24,999 | $25,000-$49,999 | $50,000-$74,999 | $75,000-$99,999 | $100,000-$124,999 | $125,000-$159,999 | $175,000 and up: please specify |

**What is your race or ethnicity?**

| □ White/Caucasian | □ Black | □ Hispanic/Latino | □ Native American | □ Asian | □ Other |

**What is your gender? □ Male □ Female**

**Additional comments:**

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Thank you for completing this survey!
WORKS CITED


Jennings, James. 2007. Select Profile on the Mattapan Neighborhood in Boston.


