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Agee, Deshea D. *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street Revitalization Assessment*

Abstract

Over 900 streets bear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's name. Many of these streets are in urban areas, stigmatized by blight and disinvestment. If left unaddressed, streets named after Dr. King may fail to become vibrant components of neighborhoods. If revitalized in a way that fails to consider racial equity and inclusion, MLK streets may be gentrified, and residents may be displaced.

As multimodal transportation extends into urban areas, safety and pedestrian needs become larger concerns. Vacant and underutilized commercial properties on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. streets affects investment in the immediate and adjacent neighborhoods, and potentially the quality of life of residents. By understanding the challenges to MLK street revitalization, communities may identify strategies to implement to improve the image and vitality of streets bearing the name of Dr. King. Stakeholders in all sectors play a critical role in the process of establishing vibrant MLK streets. Efforts to improve Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. streets begins with an examination of funding tools and organizations positioned in cities where MLK streets exist.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Throughout the United States renaming streets has been a way people commemorate Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. following his assassination on April 4, 1968 (Mitchelson, Alderman, & Popke, 2007). Cultural and historical geographer, Dr. Derek Alderman of the University of Tennessee, estimated that in 2003 more than 730 streets carried Dr. King's name (Alderman, 2008). The naming of the streets was a way to document African American expression and identity in history. Ironically, many of these streets are synonymous with blight (Mitchelson et al., 2007; Starks, 2013) and considered "economically disadvantaged and unhealthy environments" (Starks, 2013; Alderman, 2006, p.33). Prior research into streets named after Dr. King show "MLK streets are frequently located within predominantly African American neighborhoods" and that "MLK Streets, avenues, drives and boulevards each has one thing in common... they all lead to the most crime ridden parts of town" (Mitchelson, Alderman, & Popke, 2007, p. 127).

In cities, towns, and villages in the United States, some MLK streets are the neighborhood commercial shopping districts where people live, work, shop and play. Some commercial districts offer area residents a mix of retail shops, restaurants, products and services. Main Street shopping districts succeed when people are willing to pay for products and services offered by various businesses. Population growth or decline are factors that affect the success of these commercial shopping districts.

While age, ethnicity, and income of residents provide of glimpse of who lives in an area other factors are important to a business succeeded in a location. One factor is how well the demographics of the area match the business's target customer. A second factor is how many businesses are competing for the same customer. A third factor is how well a business owner or

entrepreneur manages the business income. A fourth factor is whether qualified employees trained to do the work required in the business (Heitzman, 2016).

In various communities, neighborhoods began changing in the 1960s when urban renewal policies were enacted (Wolf & LeBeaux, 1967). In some instances, government agencies used the power of eminent domain to take land from property owners in African American communities purportedly to build freeways. As a result, many residents in the area were forced to move to new neighborhoods. In some cities, the proposed freeways did not get built. The Bronzeville neighborhood in Milwaukee is one area where this occurred. In the 1960s Milwaukee's Bronzeville neighborhood was bustling with commerce, social connections, arts, and entertainment until an urban renewal project leveled the neighborhood making way for a freeway that did not get built. Bronzeville's eastern border was North 3rd Street. On November 13, 1984, the city of Milwaukee renamed North 3rd Street to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive (Milwaukee Common Council legislative, 1984; Kane, 2011).

Concurrently, following Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death on April 4, 1968 communities looked for ways to honor Dr. King's life and contributions to society. One way to honor Dr. King was to name streets after the civil rights leader. An estimated 900 streets, avenues, and roads have received Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s name. Most of these MLK streets were renamed in the first 25 years after Dr. King's death (Alderman, 2008; Starks, 2013). Research into this topic reveals many streets carrying Dr. King's name was located in predominantly African American communities in cities, villages, and towns.

Over the past 20 years, streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. have suffered from economic neglect, blight, and in some cases hostile political dynamics surrounding street renaming. Alderman (2008) observed in Woodland, Georgia a broken Martin Luther King street

sign that “speaks to the degraded and poor conditions along some of the South’s Martin Luther King streets” (Alderman, 2008, p.100). Also in Woodland, a wastewater treatment plant was observed on a MLK street very close to some of the county’s housing authority homes in a minority community, contributing to a belief of “marginalization of King’s memory” (Alderman, 2008, p. 100). Tilove (2003) recounts the words of Angela Williams of Belle Glade, Florida, who stated “every Martin Luther King looks the same. The worst street in the city is named after Martin Luther King” (Tilove, 2003, p. 10).

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive experienced disinvestment following a civil disturbance that some call the “Riot of 1967” (Stingl, 2016). Milwaukee’s disturbance followed riots in the cities of Harlem, Rochester and Philadelphia, where African American residents burned stores and battled the mostly white police forces in those cities. (Sugrue & Goodman, 2007). The incidents resulted from resident unhappiness about housing discrimination and discontent with police actions against African Americans. The riot in Milwaukee lasted one day, with the National Guard called in after Mayor Henry Meier instituted a 24-hour curfew (Semley & Janecky, 2016).

Since that time, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive has improved. MLK Heritage Health Center was renovated and expanded in 2013 at the cost of \$4.2 million. At the time of this study, mixed-use properties are being renovated, adding such local businesses as Gee’s Clippers™, DreamBikes™, and Pilcrow Coffee™. Most recently a local grocery store, Pete’s Fruit Market™, opened in a building that previously housed a Walgreens store. Bader Philanthropies™, one of Wisconsin’s largest philanthropic organizations, is investing more than \$9 million into renovating a building into its new corporate offices. Nearly two miles of Martin Luther King Jr Drive was awarded the Wisconsin Main Street designation on August 22, 2017.

In January 2018, Milwaukee Advanced Foot and Ankle's Dr. Mexton Deacon announced plans to build a \$2 million three-story facility on vacant land, and to relocate the practice on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Rise and Grind Café™ opened February 2018, and Mi Casa Su Café opened December 2017. Despite this progress, more investment is needed to create a street that honors the legacy of Dr. King.

Within Milwaukee's King Drive Main Street area, a review of 2018 City of Milwaukee property assessment data revealed approximately 80 percent occupancy of the commercial space as an office, residential, industrial or retail use. More than a dozen parcels remain vacant, while there are nearly two dozen commercial spaces unoccupied or underutilized. Some of these have not been occupied for five years or more.

Statement of the Problem

There has not been an effective business case promoting the advantages of investing in commercial districts in urban areas where the primary street bears the name Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. As a result, commercial districts on streets named after Dr. King Jr. are not flourishing uniformly. Lack of investment by property owners, lack of dedicated funding from local government agencies, and lack of interest from the investment community are possible reasons why some commercial districts remain stagnant. The lack of investment has led to community development agencies role in leading improvements in these urban neighborhoods. The need for community development is important, because physical and social decline has devastated these neighborhoods resulting in low quality housing stocks, low business growth, stifled entrepreneurial endeavors, and few employment opportunities (Rosenthal, 2008; Owens, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

This study has a four-fold purpose. First, it seeks to identify similarities between streets named after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that are commercial corridors in St. Louis, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois; Seattle, Washington; Washington, D.C.; Milwaukee, WI; and Cincinnati, Ohio. The similarities will inform recommendations to spur revitalization of commercial districts named after Dr. King. Second, the study seeks to identify successful efforts and best practices in these African-American communities that encourage residents to support businesses operating in neighborhood commercial districts. Third, this study seeks to inform the roles that local political leaders, economic development agencies, investors, residents, and entrepreneurs play to change the negative perception surrounding the streets, roads, and avenues named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Finally, the findings of this study will be applied to the revitalization efforts on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Assumptions of the Study

The following are all assumptions made for this study.

1. Urban neighborhoods are important to the fabric of cities.
2. Communities where minorities live have the potential to be as vibrant as communities that are not populated by people of color.
3. Regardless of race, gender-identity, or current economic status every human being deserves an opportunity to live in vibrant, safe community where career opportunities exist.
4. Qualitative and quantitative data collected from surveys and interviews of economic development professionals, and community development professionals, is credible data upon which conclusions may be based.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are important to the topic and are defined below for clarity:

Blighted property. A building this is substandard, unsafe, insanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent; discontinued industrial uses; unimproved vacant land not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital; a property that lacks proper utilization (Gordon, 2004).

Business Improvement District (BID). Organizations entitled to levy an additional property tax within a specified area for providing a defined range of services or carrying out specific works (Ha & Grunwell, 2014).

But-For. One of the tests required to determine whether a municipality's use of tax increment financing is warranted for redevelopment of an area (Reinert, 2001).

Community Development Corporation. A non-profit corporation usually managed and controlled by local-neighborhood residents to achieve goals of community-based economic development, affordable housing construction and rehabilitation, business development, and other social objectives (Brower, 1971; Goetz, & Sidney, 1995).

Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). Independent social finance institutions that provide local sources of finance to financially excluded individuals and commercial and social enterprises (Appleyard, 2011, p. 250).

Competitive Advantage. Business communication and organizational processes that allow for collaboration across business units and geographic areas to assist in problem solving and driving innovation (Black & La Venture, 2015, p. 83).

EB-5. A federal visa program offering a foreign investor permanent U.S. resident status for making a capital investment of at least \$500,000 in a designated area or \$1,000,000 into a business that generates at least 10-full time jobs within two years (Slattery, 2015, p. 503).

Economic development. Activities that expand capacities to realize the potential of individuals, firms, or communities who contribute to the advancement of society through the responsible production of goods and services (Feldman, Hadjimichael, Lanahan, & Kemeny, 2015, p. 18).

Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). The world's leader in providing geographic information system (GIS) software and solutions to help people better understand information about communities worldwide (Lee, 1997, p. 524).

Gentrification. Process of neighborhood-based class changes that involve an influx of middle- and upper-class residents into urban areas that once housed low income and working-class populations. (Lester & Hartley, 2014, p. 81)

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). Financing instrument created by the federal government to attract private equity investment for the development of affordable rental housing for low income individuals and families (Fuhry & Wells, 2013, p. 32).

Micro-loans. Capital provided by peer-lending mechanisms to potentially high-risk borrowers such as start-ups or small business enterprises who may lack collateral or have poor or non-existent credit histories (Anthony, 1997).

Mixed-Use property. Real estate that integrates income from a combination of retail, office, residential, hotel, recreation, or other functions (International Council of Shopping Centers, 2006).

Small Business Administration. A federal agency created in 1953 to foster capacity of small businesses through various programs designed to provide financial assistance, general business counseling, and assurance of debt repayments (Olson, 1966, p. 1109-1110).

Small Starts. Program administered by the Federal Transit Authority to fund transportation projects such as bus rapid transit (BRT), light rail, commuter rail, or streetcar that have total project costs of less than \$300 million and funding sought is less than \$100 million (Sciara, 2012; Federal Transit Authority, 2017).

Special Service Area (“SSA”). SSA is a special tax levied on property owners to improve a neighborhood, where the proceeds are used to pay for trash collection, sidewalk cleaning, landscaping, snow removal, security and marketing (Jones, 2006).

Transitional. A neighborhood where the population is in a state of change, particularly with new residents entering that may be ethnically different from existing residents. (The Yale Law Journal Company Inc., 1980).

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant Program. Created in 2009 in part to aid in the national economic recovery, this federal government program funds a portion of streetcar infrastructure costs in local municipalities (King & Fischer, 2016).

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the study which are listed below:

1. This study is limited to information gathered from peer reviewed articles, websites, and from the participants who agreed to share insights into the work being done in their respective communities.

2. A strong connection between economic development initiatives and organizations working to improve streets named after Dr. King may not be readily available. In absence of baseline information from which to define the problem, the conclusion can only be based on the information collected as part of this study.
3. This study does not include research on the condition of buildings and local taxes on properties in the study areas.
4. The study is only a description of economic development activities and initiatives occurring in the cities studied at the time of this writing. A thorough review of all past initiatives was not completed for any city.
5. The final limitation of the study is generalizability. The study is based on research into a small sample of streets named after Dr. King. The generalized nature of the conclusions may pertain to certain streets named after Dr. King, while not pertaining to others.

Methodology

A Qualtrics™ survey will be distributed through email to neighborhood revitalization practitioners seeking information on initiatives, planning efforts and economic development activities currently underway in various cities. Secondly, interviews will be conducted with individuals in organizations leading economic development efforts in study area. The interviewees include economic development practitioners, such as business improvement district executive directors, community development professional, government grants' administrators, property owners and real estate development leaders. In addition, philanthropic leaders and business owners will be interviewed.

Summary

In Chapter 1 an overview of history pertaining to street naming after Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was shared. Street location attributes were shared, namely that MLK streets are often located in African American communities and that disinvestment appears uniform among many of the streets. Chapter 2 documents literature reviewed and highlights economic development practices potentially available to communities. Chapter 3 documents the methods and instrumentation for the study. Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the study. Chapter 5 will present the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Four categories of literature were reviewed for this paper. The first category of literature was naming streets, roads, and avenues after Dr. King. The second category was urban renewal's impact on African American communities. The third was community development tools, initiatives, and organizations. The final category of literature reviewed for this paper was the role of streetcar and transit systems driving economic development in urban areas.

Naming Streets After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

During the civil right movements of the 1950s and 1960s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. promoted non-violence while communicating the need for equality among all men and women. Dr. King carried a message that much could be achieved through non-violent protests. As the most visible African American leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. life was an impetus to ending segregation. Dr. King led peaceful marches and national gatherings to promote equal rights for African Americans. Dr. King focused on ensuring economic justice for all, eliminating barriers for African Americans to vote. After a fifteen-year debate and a final approval by the House of Representatives, President Ronald Reagan signed into law HR3706 legislation on November 2, 1983, creating a federal holiday commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. birthday (Straus, 2014). Carson and Holloran (1991) wrote "legislation to establish Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday as a federal holiday provided official recognition of King's greatness, but it remains the responsibility of those of us who study and carry on King's work to define his historical significance" (Carson & Holloran, 1991, p. 27).

Vacant storefronts, limited consistent economic growth, roads in disrepair, lack of public amenities, and unoccupied buildings were themes the literature revealed. The literature unveiled a major similarity in the MLK streets, namely that many were located disproportionately in

African American communities (Tilove, 2003). A second similarity found was residents in various cities believed streets named after Dr. King provided a sense of history and togetherness (Tilove, 2003).

The literature review also revealed community members were aware that MLK streets exist in cities nationwide. In knowing the streets existed residents believed that MLK streets were a form of memorial to honor the civil rights leader's legacy (Tilove, 2003). The condition of the streets, however, consistently were known to have a negative perception.

Challenges to renaming streets. Research into the topic revealed a host of challenges with streets named for the slain civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Challenges to renaming streets included racial tensions, opposition from businesses and residents that could be affected, and questions of who would fund costs associated to making the address changes (Alderman, 2008). In some instances, months or years passed before the name change occurred. In some instances, a street name change did not occur. In other instances, parties reached a compromise. For example, in Covington, Kentucky a 20-year debate ended with Dr. King's name being added to 12th street, so property owners "would not incur the cost of losing their numerical address" (Alderman, Spina, & Mitchell, 2008, p. 20).

Urban Renewal and Revitalization on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Streets

Research into the subject revealed a host of individuals and organizations led revitalization efforts to change the perception of streets named after Martin Luther King Jr. In St. Louis in 2009, Melvin White formed the nonprofit *Beloved Streets of America (BSA)* with a goal focused on creating improvements to the commercial and residential areas of the 8-mile stretch of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive (Duffy & Coddling, 2016). BSA identified four key areas of improvements to revitalize and bring dignity to MLK streets. The areas included: 1) public

necessities, namely the types of businesses needed on MLK streets; 2) architectural development namely pedestrian, public space, and streetscape amenities for MLK streets; 3) energy and conservation, related to namely sustainability features recommended to be incorporated into MLK streets; 4). BSA's suggested methods to improve the image of MLK streets also included increasing accessibility to arts and entertainment activities for residents in the immediate and surrounding areas.

Another organization who worked on revitalization in St. Louis was Hamilton Heights Neighborhood Association. The community development organization, which launched in 1992, was led by Shavette Wayne-Jones, a long time St. Louis resident. Duffy and Coddling (2016) reported Wayne-Jones observed potential for a revitalized Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. Partnerships of residents, the city of St. Louis and Washington University revealed the possibility to create a wholistic approach to improving the neighborhood surrounding Dr. Martin Luther King Drive (Duffy & Coddling, 2016).

In Cincinnati, Ohio Uptown Consortium, Inc. launched in 2004 to encourage revitalization of over 600 acres including a focal point at Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Interstate 71. Wetterich (2014) described conditions that were discouraging people from walking along MLK or Reading Road, noting there were many surface parking lots, unattractive streetscapes and an absence of a sense of place (Cincinnati Business Courier, 2014 para. 3). The Consortium included anchor institutions and civic leaders, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, UC Health, TriHealth, Inc., Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, and the University of Cincinnati.

In Chicago, Illinois, the Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI) launched in 2010 to revitalize underserved and distressed urban neighborhoods. CNI's approach to revitalization in

Chicago's Bronzeville, Englewood and Pullman neighborhoods included real estate development of commercial, residential and industrial sites. One of the projects was the development of Mariano's 74,000 square foot full service grocery store at 39th Street and Martin Luther King Boulevard. 51st Street Business Association and Quad Communities Development Corporation were among a growing list of organizations who worked to revitalize Martin Luther King Boulevard (Quad Communities Development Corp., 2016).

In Seattle, several organizations led efforts to revitalize Martin Luther King Jr. Way and surrounding neighborhoods. MLK Business Association began in Seattle in 2008 as an agency that promoted and supported businesses along MLK Jr. Way. MLK Business Association conducted tours of businesses along MLK Jr. Way, reporting information about products and services offered by businesses to the community. The Association maintained a database of businesses in the area. Area business owners were the leaders of the Association. Membership was open to all businesses along MLK Jr. Way.

HomeSight™ was a nonprofit organization established in 1990 to focus on community building, business growth and real estate development. HomeSight delivered curriculum-based education to assist residents about purchasing and maintaining ownership of a home. HomeSight was instrumental in developing community leaders. HomeSight also supported efforts to improve safety, security, and attractiveness in the area around Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Additionally, HomeSight Real Estate Development developed homes for residents, providing "homeownership opportunities to those at risk of being priced out of the communities in which they live and work" (HomeSight, 2017, para. 1).

Additionally, the Southeast Economic Opportunity Center (SEOC) development, launched in 2016, was led by HomeSight. Southeast Economic Opportunity Center was a

proposed multi-phase facility in Southeast Seattle that provided: “postsecondary education connected to job skill development; small business assistance and entrepreneurship center; employment services; affordable commercial space for neighborhood businesses and cultural organizations to stabilize services to the diverse residents of South Seattle; and affordable market rate rental and low-income ownership housing, to balance market rate and very low income projects” (HomeSight, 2017, para. 2).

Community development tools and initiatives. Cities such as Chicago, Cincinnati, Seattle, St. Louis and Milwaukee had local governments that used a trusted tool, tax increment finance (TIF), to pay for eligible improvements to spur economic development and private investment in areas considered blighted. Lester (2014) wrote “in its most basic form, a local government designates an area as a TIF district targeted for redevelopment within a city or county. At the time of designation, property taxes from the district that normally flow to existing public budgets were frozen for a specified time, typically 20 years or more. Any new tax assessment associated with increased property values paid for economic redevelopment projects of incentives only within the designated TIF district.” Reinert (2001) described how municipalities established tax increment districts by concluding properties were blighted in part because development could not reasonably be expected to occur by the private sector. Reinert (2001) continued by establishing the role of the “but-for” test, namely that tax increment districts were the financial incentive necessary for the private sector to have confidence in the area’s development potential. In January 2015, twenty-one tax increment finance districts existed in Cincinnati (City of Cincinnati, 2016).

New market tax credits (NMTC) were part of the Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000, which provided “incentives for private sector investment into economic development

projects and businesses located in low-income communities” (La Franchi, 2010, p. 5). Overseen by the U.S. Department of Treasury and administered by the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI), new markets tax credits were allocated to banks, insurance companies, non-profit organizations, real estate developers, for profit economic development agencies, and government agencies.

Numerous economic development tools that impacted neighborhoods were revealed in previous literature. Among the tools listed were low income housing tax credits (LIHTC), EB-5 Immigrant Investor program, Community Development Corporations (CDCs), Small Business Administration (SBA) loans, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI), and micro lending programs (ie. KIVA Zip, Go Fund Me). Government grants through the Federal Transit Authority such as TIGER grants, Small Starts grants for streetcar development were among the funding tools the incentive local governments to expand their view of connected transit systems.

The role of business improvement districts. Business improvement districts (BID) were described as publicly sanctioned special districts that rely on self-assessment of property owners to fund a range of local neighborhood revitalization services and activities (Ruffin, 2010). BIDs were described by Ruffin (2010) as entrepreneurial place management agents operating in the built environment to collaborate on pro-economic growth initiatives and revitalization policy planning. The origin of North America BIDs date to the late 1960s, after being birthed in Toronto, Canada. Lippert and Sleiman (2012) contend that BIDs evolved into economic development ambassadors. As such, BIDs “construct and showcase consumer oriented urban environments via ‘streetscaping’ enhancements (such as banners, street lighting and sidewalk benches), marketing events (such as street festivals and district wide sales) and in some BIDs – security provision” (Lippert and Sleiman, 2012, p. 64). Grossman (2008) indicated BIDs

filled the community need for “successful organized approaches to development, revitalization, and improvements” (p. 297).

Some BIDs prioritized services such as, sanitation and security to “create clean and safe spaces that attract more shoppers and investors” (Hoyt, 2004). BIDs were found to have funded security patrols. Security patrols in BIDs observed, and reported suspected criminal activity to local police, coordinated graffiti removal, litter removal, and functioned as guardians of public space (Hoyt, 2004, p. 371). Collectively these efforts contributed indirectly to crime deterrence, and the perception of streets as safer places.

BIDs were found to encompass the tenets of public private partnerships, where property owners operated with municipal authority behind them to privately finance local development (Ruffin, 2010). The literature expounded on BIDs as outcome-driven entities strengthened by accountability to stakeholders. For example, BIDs engaged the business community to improve an area’s quality of life, and implemented “comprehensive strategies that satisfy political, economic and social concerns” of the area (Grossman, 2008, p. 297). Ratcliffe & Flanagan (2004) stated that “a successful BID can increase an area’s prosperity, attract inward investment and give a regional competitive advantage in terms of tourist destination management and visitor generation and spending” (Ha & Grunwell, 2014, p.91).

Research by Grossman (2008) found BIDs emerged as a reaction to the social fragmentation caused by suburbanization. As entrepreneurial community development agencies with self-governance abilities BIDs pursued a mission to provide safe environments for shoppers, workers, residents and tourists (Grossman, 2008; Mitchell, 2001). BIDs operated in commercial areas of downtowns, neighborhoods, city centers, and industrial areas. Grossman (2008) spoke to BID management innovations resulted in vibrant places (p. 301). The BIDs

“work with alternative stakeholders” and “supervisor approach concerned with efficient management of day to day activities” were ways BID’s innovated as place management agents (Grossman, 2008, p. 301; Mitchell, 2001, p. 206).

Role of Streetcar and Transit Systems Related to Economic Development

Streetcars have been a form of transit similar to buses closely associated with urban communities. Culver (2017) provided an analysis that streetcars epitomized urban transportation in the early 20th century, until disappearing during automobile-based suburbanization. Gibson (2017) explored the resurgence of urbanization, suggesting smart growth planners see streetcars creating a more “sustainable (i.e. higher density, mixed-use, walkable) walkable urban community” (p. 2). Although modern streetcars come at a higher cost than buses, economic growth has been observed in cities like Portland and Seattle.

While exploring the impact of the streetcar in urban neighborhoods, Guthrie and Fan (2013) referenced research by Poticha and Ohland (2006) suggesting \$2.3 billion in development occurred around the Portland, Oregon streetcar line built in 2001. The redevelopment of two mostly abandoned industrial areas were included in the findings. Guthrie and Fan (2013) researched the impact of streetcar development in relation to commercial development in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. This research revealed the following: (1) “few streetcar systems in the United States remain outside of downtown business districts; (2) the few streetcar systems that operate outside of downtown business districts (in Boston, New Orleans and Philadelphia) often serve older historic urban neighborhoods, and (3) most streetcar systems in North America operate alongside other transit services including bus and rail lines” (Guthrie and Fan, 2013, pg. 382). In New Orleans, residents voiced the preference for having a streetcar as a transit option for neighborhoods (Guthrie and Fan, 2013; Hong and Fraley, 2008). Guthrie and

Fan's study of commercial and residential building permits along the New Orleans streetcar line also revealed the traditional streetcar lines were "worthy of consideration for supporting mixes of uses" as well as "commercial corridors in neighborhood areas outside of downtown business districts" (p. 392).

In researching urban transportation development, Culver (2017) suggested the reemergence of streetcars as embedded in neoliberal urbanization. Culver provided evidence suggesting streetcars were a creative city urban development strategy. More specifically, streetcars were described as spurring economic development and encouraging investment in commercial and residential projects (Culver, 2017, p. 25). Additionally, Culver suggested streetcars were a strategy to "attract new residents, new talent, and new businesses" while also increasing property values and local tax bases (Culver, 2017, p. 25). Further, streetcars "strengthen the downtown; encourage revitalization; create jobs; increase tourism; make existing destinations even more attractive, and local businesses stronger; and benefit creative/knowledge sector workers" (Culver, 2017, p. 25). Improving the quality of life and city images were added, as a byproduct of streetcar development. Finally, attracting "high-quality" transit users, attracting creative talent, and reinvigorating businesses were stated reasons streetcar development is positive for communities.

Summary

Chapter 2 discussed the categories of literature reviewed for this paper. Literature concerning street naming found similarities between streets named after Dr. King, namely that many were in predominately African American communities. Chapter 2 referenced some of the challenges to naming streets after Dr. King. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology for the study.

Chapter III: Methodology

The study seeks to understand what individuals, economic development agencies, and community development organizations are doing to improve streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Alderman (2003) wrote “analyzing King streets is an important entry point to understanding how blacks struggle to incorporate their achievements into the nations collective memory” (p. 165). The purpose of the study is to development a toolkit of best practices that can be implemented on a local level to improve the perception and built environment of streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This study and purpose stems from a key problem with streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., namely these streets historically have been perceived as being some of the most disinvested streets bearing the same name. The invitation for the study was provided by Historic King Drive BID No. 8 (see Appendix A).

Subject Selection and Description

Individuals who self-selected for this study were placed into one of three categories: 1) the individuals currently working to revitalize a street named after Dr. King; 2) has written about streets named after Dr. King; and 3) the individual has an expertise in economic development or community development. An online Qualtrics™ survey sought input from directors of business improvement districts and main streets, managers of city departments, community development leaders and others in economic development. The sample size for the Qualtrics survey was 30. Implied consent forms relayed to participants the purpose of the study (See Appendix B). The Qualtrics Survey consisted of 22 survey constructs that used an implied consent process (see Appendix C).

Following the online survey, fifteen interviews were conducted either in person or by phone with key informants from the named categories. Signed consent was used and reviewed

with each interview participant prior to the beginning of each interview (See Appendix D). Each interview consisted of up to twenty-four questions (see Appendix E). The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to one hour.

Instrumentation

A Qualtrics™ survey was sent to executive directors, business leaders, city managers and planners, real estate developers, and economic development practitioners to obtain information about the function of business improvement districts (“BIDs”), Special Service Areas (“SSAs”) and economic development agencies in the cities being studied. The questions sought to identify economic development trends and strategies related to improvement for commercial districts, particularly streets named after Dr. King. The survey sought to understand how agencies utilized tax increment financing, grants, loans and other financial resources to improve the viability of blighted commercial districts. The one-on-one interviews followed the Qualtrics™ survey.

Data Collection Procedures

Points of interest were identified on streets named after Dr. King in the study areas. Data on population, income, housing, and employment were selected for a radius of five-minute, ten-minute and fifteen-minutes of the point of interest. The data was secured through the Esri database. A visit was also conducted to streets named after Dr. King in Chicago and Seattle to gain a visual perspective of the street and to talk with individuals leading revitalization efforts. An online Qualtrics™ survey was conducted. One-on-one interviews between the researcher and commercial revitalization practitioners followed the survey.

Data Analysis

Streets named after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were selected in Cincinnati (Ohio), St. Louis (Missouri), Chicago (Illinois), Seattle (Washington), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), and

Washington D.C. Data from the Qualtrics survey was analyzed. Central themes and subthemes were identified from the interview data.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study include the following:

1. This study is limited to information gathered from peer reviewed articles, websites, and from the participants who agreed to share insights into the work being done in their respective communities.
2. A strong connection between economic development initiatives and organizations working to improve streets named after Dr. King may not be readily available. In absence of baseline information from which to base the problem, the conclusion can only be based on the information collected as part of this study.
3. This study does not include research on the condition of buildings and local taxes on properties in the study areas.
4. The study is only a description of economic development activities and initiatives occurring in the cities studied at the time of this writing. A thorough review of all past initiatives was not completed for any city.
5. The final limitation of the study is generalizability. The study is based on research into a small sample of streets named after Dr. King. The generalized nature of the conclusions may pertain to certain streets named after Dr. King, while not pertaining to others.

Summary

Chapter 3 details the methodology to understanding elements of a toolkit that can be used to improve the perception and built environment of MLK streets. A QualtricsTM survey

comprised of 22 questions is planned for completion by up to 30 economic development practitioners. Interviews of 10-15 individuals were conducted to validate the data provided in the surveys. Chapter 3 also described the limitations of the study.

Chapter IV: Results

Chapter IV provides the results of the survey and interviews. Chapter IV also provides demographic information of subject cities (Chicago, IL; Seattle, WA; Cincinnati, OH; St. Louis, MO; Milwaukee, WI; and Washington D.C.). Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data in charts and graphs.

Demographics

The survey was completed by 14 economic development practitioners and community leaders from cities including Chicago, Milwaukee, Seattle, St. Louis and Washington D.C. The response rate for the survey was 40% (14 out of 35). The job titles for the survey and interview participants included the following: Executive Directors, Community Development professionals, property owners, and government grant administrators, among others.

Item Analysis

The item analysis consisted of quantitative item analysis for survey, qualitative item analysis for survey, and qualitative item analysis for interviews.

Quantitative item analysis for survey. The survey was comprised of 22 questions based on the UW Stout Qualtrics™ platform through the University of Wisconsin Stout. The questions sought opinions about the current conditions and desired conditions of streets, avenues and boulevards bearing the name of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the select cities. The selected cities were Chicago, IL; Milwaukee, WI; Seattle, WA; St. Louis, MO; and Washington D.C.

Table 1

Estimate the Number of Buildings on the MLK Street in the Commercial District

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	1-15	1	7%
2	16-30	1	7%
3	31-45	0	0
4	45-60	2	14%
5	61 or more	10	72%
	Total	14	100

The first question of the survey reflects a majority of respondent's estimation that there are a significant number of buildings on the MLK street in their commercial districts. This table shows the choice for the highest number of buildings, 61 or more, was selected by 72% percent of the respondents. The two choices for the lowest number of buildings, 1 to 15 buildings and 16-30 buildings, was selected by a total of 14% of the respondents. This data shows the cities being studied generally are similar commercial corridors with a high number of buildings on the MLK street.

Table 2

What Percentage of Buildings on the MLK Street Do You Estimate are in Disrepair?

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	0-20%	6	42.86%
2	21-40%	4	28.57%
3	41-60%	4	28.57%
4	61-80%	0	0%
5	81% or more	0	0%
	Total	14	100

Question two represents an estimate of the percentage of buildings on the MLK street in disrepair. Table 2 illustrates a low number of buildings are in disrepair with 43% of the respondents reporting 20% or less of the buildings on the MLK street were in poor condition. Interesting, 28.57% of the respondents indicated between 21% and 30% of the buildings needed restoration. Another 28.57% of the respondents estimated 41% to 60% of the buildings on their MLK streets were in disrepair. None of the respondents reported building dilapidation was more than 61%. The data suggests that noticeable change may be seen with investment into the building on MLK street.

Table 3

Rank the Building Elements in the Order You Want to See Them Improved Most on Your MLK Street. 1st Most Important = Rank 1, 2nd Most Important = Rank 2, 3rd Most Important = Rank 3, 4th Most Important = Rank 4

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4
	%	%	%	%
Building Exterior Façade (Windows and Doors)	38.46%	30.77%	15.38%	15.38%
Building Exterior (Parking Lots)	0.00%	12.50%	25%	25.00%
Building Exterior (Brick Walls)	7.69%	23.08%	53.85%	15.38%
Building Interior (Commercial space)	27.27%	18.18%	18.18%	9.09%
Landscaping	33.33%	25.00%	8.33%	33.33%
Roof and Foundations	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	25%
	Total Responses			14

Table three represents a ranking of building elements in order of most needed improvements. Six elements were listed. However, two were to remain unranked. The survey

construct was not clear, leading to all items being selected by some of the respondents. This question, therefore, cannot be considered valid. Building exterior façade (windows and doors) topped the rankings for most needed improvement with five of the respondents (38.46%) selecting the element first and four respondents (30.77%) the element second. Landscaping ranked second in most desired improvement with four of the respondents (33.33%) ranking landscaping as the first choice and three respondents (25%) selecting the element as the second choice. Building exterior (brick/walls) ranked third, receiving seven of the respondents (53.85%) ranking the element. Building interior (commercial space) ranked fourth in most needed improvements, receiving the highest remaining ranking of the final three elements.

Table 4

How Many of the Buildings on the MLK Street Do You Estimate are Owned by the City or Local Municipality?

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
	35%	1	7%
	15%	1	7%
	10%	3	22%
	Less than 5%	1	7%
	10	2	14%
	8	2	14%
	5	2	14%
	0	2	14%
	Total	14	100

Table four represents an estimate the number of buildings on the MLK street owned by the City of local municipality. The survey construct was not clear, leading responses to vary from numbers to percentages. This question, therefore, cannot be considered valid. Two of the respondents (14%) estimated there were no properties on the MLK street owned by the City or

local municipality. One respondent estimated less than five percent of buildings on the MLK street were owned by the City or local municipality, while six respondents (43%) estimated five to ten buildings on the MLK street were owned by the City of local municipality. Four of the respondents (29%) estimated 10% to 15% of the buildings on the MLK street were owned by the City or local municipality. One respondent estimated 35% of buildings on the MLK Street were owned by the City or local municipality. Table two does not show the specific city.

Table 5

Are You Aware if Your City's Economic Development Agency Has Any of the Following Grants to Help with Commercial District Revitalization?

#	Answer	Response		Response		% Respondents
		Yes	% Yes	No	% No	
	Building Exterior improvement grants	13	93%	1	7%	100%
	Building interior improvement grants	7	50%	7	50%	100%
	Business signage grants	10	71%	4	29%	100%
	Business job creation grants	9	64%	5	36%	100%
Total Responses					14	

Table five represents respondent awareness of specific grant available through the local economic development agencies to improve commercial buildings. Thirteen of the respondents (93%) were aware of local grants to improve the exterior of buildings, while only one of respondents was unaware. Seven of the respondents (50%) were aware grants to improve the interior of buildings while the other half was unaware. Ten of the respondents (71%) were aware of local business signage grant programs, while four respondents (29%) were unaware. Nine of the respondents (64%) were aware of grants that support job creation in businesses. Of all the

grant programs for commercial buildings, half of the respondents (50%) were not aware if the city's economic development agency had grants to improve the interior of commercial spaces.

Table 6

What are Reasons for Lack of Awareness?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Open Response	4	29%
2	No Response	10	71%
	Total	14	100%

Table six is an open text response follow up to Question 5 seeking to find out reasons why the grant programs were not more known. Four respondents provided reasons for lack of awareness of the economic development agency grants. This open-ended question drew four responses. One respondent wrote, "I don't think most people are aware of the grants offered by the city and don't know to ask if there are grants available, or who to ask for that matter." One respondent wrote the city is "lacking infrastructure for mass communication." Another respondent wrote, "it's not lack of awareness, it's that the resources aren't enough." This answer alludes to the need for increased funding for improving commercial properties. Another respondent wrote, "I think there are monies available, but building owners need to do a lot of research." A potential theme is a need for increased funding for improving commercial properties. A second potential theme is there is a need to have information readily available for property owners. Simple acts such as promoting the grant programs to make it easier way for building owners to learn the steps to apply to access available funds may help increase awareness of the grant programs.

Table 7

What is the Estimated Number of Vacant Lots on the MLK Street in Your Community?

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	1-4	1	7%
2	5-9	8	57%
3	10-15	2	14%
4	16 or more	3	22%
Total		14	100

Question seven asked respondents to estimate the number of vacant lots on the MLK street. Eight of the respondents (57%) indicated there were 5 to 9 vacant lots on the MLK street. Three of the respondents (22%) indicated there were 16 to more vacant lots on the MLK street. Two (14%) of the respondents estimated 15 to 30 buildings on the MLK street. One (7%) of the respondents estimated 1 to 4 vacant lots on the MLK street. The data suggests a considerable number of vacant lots exist on the MLK streets.

Table 8

What is the Estimated Number of Property Owners Who Participate on Boards or Committees that Work on Revitalization Efforts?

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	1-5	2	17%
2	6-10	2	17%
3	11-15	1	8%
4	16-20	4	33%
5	21 or more	3	25%
	Total	12	100

Question eight sought respondent feedback on the number of property owners participating on boards or committees that work on revitalization efforts. Table 8 illustrates 25% of the respondents estimated 21 or more property owners participate while 33% of the respondents estimated 16 to 20 property owners participate on boards or committees working on revitalization efforts. A low 8% of the respondents estimated 11 to 15 property owners are involved in revitalization efforts, while 17% of the respondents estimated 6 to 10 property owners participate in steering revitalization efforts. The final 17% of respondents estimated 1 to 5 property owners participate in steering revitalization efforts. Overall this suggests revitalization is occurring with the involvement of current stakeholders.

Table 9

How Would You Classify Your Organization?

#	Answer	Response		Response		Total Responses
		Yes	% Yes	No	% No	
	Business Improvement District	5	50%	5	50%	10
	Special Service Area	2	22%	7	78%	9
	Community Development Corporation	4	40%	6	60%	10
	Economic Development Corporation	4	44%	5	56%	9
	Main Street designated district	2	22%	7	78%	9
	Other	7	100%	0	0%	7
Total Responses					14	

Question nine sought to identify the types of organizations represented in the study. The results indicated 50% of the respondents identified as business improvement districts, while 22% of the respondents identified as Special Service Areas. Four of the respondents (40%) identified as community development corporations, while four (40%) also identified as economic development corporations. Two respondents (22%) identified Main Street as designated districts. Seven of the respondents reported “other.” This question was not considered valid as several errors were noted in the question. Answers provided by the respondents who selected “Other” include “neighborhood council,” “private non-profit,” “real estate developer,” “local government,” “city agency”, “neighborhood coalition,” “City of Chicago,” and “Chamber of Commerce.”

Table 10

Rank Order the Following: 1st Most Important = Rank 1; 2nd Most Important = Rank 2; 3rd Most Important = Rank 3; 4th Most Important = Rank 4

	Rank 1 %	Rank 2 %	Rank 3 %	Rank 4 %
Improved Street Pavement	20.00%	30.00%	20.00%	20.00%
Better Signage for Businesses	38.46%	30.77%	7.69%	0.00%
Benches	0.00%	16.67%	16.67%	16.67%
Planters with Plants	22.22%	22.22%	55.56%	0.00%
Trash Receptacles	9.09%	27.27%	27.27%	27.27%
Trees	37.50%	0.00%	13.50%	37.50%
			Total Responses	14

Question ten sought to find out which visual elements of the MLK street respondents desired to see improved most. Six elements were listed. The answers were to be rank ordered from first most important to fourth most important. Two elements were to remain unranked. The survey construct was not clear, leading to all items being selected by some of the respondents in some rankings. This question therefore cannot be considered valid.

The table shows better signage for businesses topped the ranking with five respondents (38.46%) ranking the element the most important and four of the respondents (30.77%) ranking the element second most important. Street pavement ranked the second most important visual element desired for improve. The table shows two of the respondents (20%) ranking the element first, and three of the respondents (30%) selecting the element second most important. Planters with plants ranked third most important visual element desired for improvement. Two respondents (22.22%) selected this element first and second, while five of the respondents

(55.56%) selected the respondent third. The table displays trash receptacles as the fourth ranked most important element with ten respondents (90.90%) selecting the element through four rankings.

Table 11

Rate the Level of Engagement of the Local Government Economic Development Agency to Improving the MLK Street. Rating of 3 = Highly Engaged, 2 = Minimally Engaged, 1 = Not Engaged At All

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	Highly engaged	7	50%
2	Minimally engaged	6	43%
3	Not engaged at all	1	7%
	Total	14	100%

Table 11 is an indication of how many businesses respondents estimated were open on the MLK street. This table illustrates the clear involvement of local governments in efforts to improve the MLK streets. Half of the respondents stated the local government economic development agencies were highly engaged, and 43% responded engagement was minimal. Only one respondent stated there was no engagement by the local government's economic development agency. The results suggest the local government have allocated staff time and some amount of resources to see the MLK street improve.

Table 12

How Many Businesses are Open on Your MLK Street?

#	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	1-10	2	14%
2	11-20	1	7%
3	21-30	3	21%
4	31-40	4	29%
5	41 or more	4	29%
Total		14	100%

Question twelve indicates that 58% of the respondents have 30 or more businesses open on the MLK street. Less than a quarter of the respondents (21%) have between 20 and 30 businesses on the MLK street. A lower percentage of respondents (14%) estimated between 1 and 10 businesses were open on the MLK street, while 14% of the respondents estimated 10 businesses or less were open on the MLK street.

Table 13

Following are Business Categories. Rate Your Desirability for Each Business to Be on Your MLK Street. 3 = Highly Desired; 2 = Somewhat Desired; 1 = Not Desired

#	Highly Desired	%	Somewhat Desired	%	Not Desired	%	Total Responses
Grocery Store	7	50%	4	29%	3	21%	14
Retail	11	79%	3	21%	0	0%	14
Department Store	4	29%	3	21%	7	50%	14
Clothing	7	50%	6	43%	3	13%	14
Housewares	6	43%	4	29%	4	28%	14
Hardware	5	36%	6	43%	3	13%	14
Family entertainment	12	86%	1	7%	1	7%	14
Restaurants	13	93%	1	7%	0	0%	14
Live theatre venue	8	57%	4	29%	2	14%	14
Children's activities	8	57%	5	36%	1	7%	14

Question thirteen is designed to identify businesses for the MLK street, specifically the level of desire respondents had for different types of businesses. This table shows the most highly desired businesses were restaurants, selected by 93% of respondents; family entertainment, selected by 86% of respondents; and retail, selected by 79% of the respondents. Children's activities and live theatre venue followed as the fourth and fifth desired businesses. Half of the respondents did not desire department stores and 28% did not desire housewares. The table shows a wide range of businesses that respondents felt were missing from MLK street.

Table 14

Which Mode of Transportation is on Your MLK Street?

#	Answer	Response	%	Response	%	Total Responses
		Yes	Yes	No	No	
	Bus	14	100%	0	50%	14
	Streetcar	0	0%	9	100%	9
	Lightrail	4	36%	7	64%	11
	Bikelanes	7	64%	4	36%	11

Table 14 illustrates modes of public transportation on the MLK street. All respondents reported having buses. Bicycle lanes were reported by 64% of the respondents, while a light rail system was reported by 36% of the respondents. No respondent stated that a streetcar system was operating on the MLK street. Based on these responses, an assumption can be made that the MLK streets offer similar but distinct public transportation amenities.

Table 15

If a Streetcar or Light Rail is on Your MLK Street Describe the Positive Impact this Mode of Transportation is Having on Your Neighborhood

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Open Response	5	36%
2	No Response	9	64%
	Total	14	100%

Table 15 is an open response designed to gain respondent perspectives on positive aspects of having a streetcar or light rail system in their neighborhood. Positive impact statements shared by respondents included “increased transit-oriented development” and “better

connectivity to downtown, higher assessments.” Responses also included “it has served to ‘activate’ the areas around each of the light rail stops” and that the streetcar or light rail has increased “access to job and retail centers”. A final response was “there are more stops on MLK street than any other part of the city.” The theme gleaned from the responses was that the streetcar or light rail system located in the neighborhood increased economic development potential. A second theme was employment opportunities potentially became more accessible, either in the neighborhood or in the downtown area.

Table 16

If a Streetcar or Light Rail is on Your MLK Street Describe the Negative Impact this Mode of Transportation is Having on Your Neighborhood

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Open Response	5	36%
2	No Response	9	64%
	Total	14	100%

Question sixteen was also an open response, designed as the alternative to question fifteen. Respondents described negatives impacts of having a streetcar or light rail system in their neighborhood. Responses to this question included “displacement and gentrification” and “disrupts traffic patterns and parking, increases taxes.” Additional feedback included “the concentrations of people at the stops has caused/did cause an increase in crime” and “fare enforcement.” A final response was that the streetcar or light rail “has divided the street and make is difficult to cross the street.” This was evidenced by the above statements indicating pedestrian and driver safety has potentially decreased with these transportation systems being active in the neighborhood.

Table 17

Which Best Describes Traffic on the MLK Street?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Too fast – feels unsafe for pedestrians	9	64%
2	Fairly paced – feels about right for pedestrians	5	36%
3	Slow paced – Perfect for pedestrians	0	0%
4	Other	0	0%
Total		14	100%

Question seventeen sought to determine how the pedestrian realm was on the MLK street. Table 17 demonstrates the majority of respondents (64%) perceive traffic on the MLK street is too fast for pedestrians, impacting street walkability and street crossing. This table also shows responses that none of the respondents perceived the pace of traffic on the street was slow or perfect for pedestrians.

Table 18

Select Which Have Occurred on Your MLK Street Within the Last 5 Years

#	Answer	Response Yes	%
1	Real estate development – New housing units	11	79%
2	Real estate development – New office spaces	9	64%
3	Resident displacement due to high rents	4	29%
4	Business displacement due to increasing rents	1	7%
5	Other	2	14%
Total		14	

Question eighteen is designed to identify economic development activity occurring on the MLK street within five years. Table 18 illustrates a significant amount of economic activity and investment on the MLK street, including new residential and office development in the majority of responses. This table also shows that with some new housing development resident displacement occurred. Responses in the “Other” category included “none of the above” and “new interstate has resulted in a huge land grab.”

Table 19

Have the Completed Projects on your MLK Street used the Following Funding Mechanisms?

#	Answer	Response		Response		Total Responses
		Yes	% Yes	No	% No	
1	Tax Increment Finance (TIF)	8	67%	4	33%	12
2	New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)	10	77%	3	23%	13
3	Historic Tax Credits (HTC)	6	67%	3	64%	9
4	Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)	9	81%	2	18%	11

Question nineteen was designed to gain insight into the types of funding sources used for real estate development projects on the MLK streets. Table 19 illustrates a consistent use of federal and state tax credits and local government funding to improve the housing quality and commercial spaces on the MLK streets. Respondents noted low income housing tax credits as the funding tool used most to complete projects, with 81% of respondents in agreement. Over three fourths (77%) of the respondents indicated new markets tax credits were part of the capital stack on completed projects. Additionally, 67% of the respondents indicated the use of both tax increment finances and historic tax credits for projects. The theme revealed through this data was that state and federal funding sources contribute significantly to improving the built environment of MLK streets.

Table 20

Has Your Organization Used Any of the Following Funding Mechanisms to Improve the MLK Street?

#	Answer	Response		Response		Total Responses
		Yes	% Yes	No	% No	
1	Tax Increment Finance (TIF)	4	31%	9	69%	13
2	New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)	3	23%	10	77%	13
3	Historic Tax Credits (HTC)	4	33%	8	67%	12
4	Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)	5	42%	7	58%	12

Question twenty was designed to determine the use of funding tools by the respondent organization. As illustrated in Table 20, the organizations associated with the respondents minimally used the named funding tools for projects. The funding mechanism used by 42% of the respondents was low income housing tax credits, followed by historic tax credits (33%) and tax increment financing (31%). This does not necessarily mean the organizations had minimal involvement in the projects. The survey did not ask the specific role organizations played in projects.

Qualitative item analysis for survey. The survey was comprised of 22 questions based on the UW Stout Qualtrics™ platform through the University of Wisconsin Stout. The questions sought opinions about the current conditions and desired conditions of streets, avenues, and boulevards bearing the name of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr in the select cities. The selected cities were Chicago, IL; Milwaukee, WI; Seattle, WA; St. Louis, MO; and Washington D.C.

Table 21

In the Blanks Below Name Other Funding Mechanisms You are Aware of that May Be Used to Improve an MLK Street or Commercial Corridor

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Open Response	6	43%
2	No Response	8	57%
	Total	14	100%

Question twenty-one follows questions nineteen and twenty, allowing respondents to openly share funding tools they are aware of to improve MLK streets. Responses include “opportunity funds/opportunity zones,” “BID grant funds” and “city/local funding for affordable housing.” Other funding sources respondents identified are “Federal Transit Authority (FTA) transportation grants” and “state transportation grants.” One last funding source named to improve MLK streets was “city capital” and “community development block grant (CDBG) funds.” These answers suggest many funding sources exist to improve MLK streets.

Table 22

In a Few Sentences Describe Your MLK Street

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Open Response	11	79%
2	No Response	3	21%
	Total	14	100%

Respondents provided free text explanations to describe their MLK street. Twelve written responses were provided. Responses provide details of the type of street (i.e.,

commercial district or highway), as well as varied themes of the MLK street's positive economic activity and challenges the MLK streets face. One free text response labeled the MLK street a "vibrant corridor with a diverse population" while another suggested the "MLK drive has seen tremendous growth and investment." A third free text response states the MLK street is "in progress, more developed southern end." The respondent added the street has "a good variety of businesses, but there is still a need for more in the same category" and "the street needs a more uniform look."

A fifth survey response indicated the MLK street is "up and coming/improving," and having "more niche businesses going in." A sixth response is the MLK street has "great untapped potential and momentum," "but needs more community support, and better connectivity and partnerships between businesses" to make it a "destination hub."

A seventh respondent states the MLK street was "newly upgraded due to the light rail development" and "re-emerging due to years of construction." The respondent added there were "too many small lots due to eminent domain effects" and "not all of the sewer pipe connections (are) restored." This suggests that some positive aspects of street improvements also resulted in potential undesirable effects.

An eighth respondent described the MLK as having "strong history," also "some of the most attractive blocks in the City, but also blocks with high levels of vacancy." This MLK street "connects downtown to adjacent neighborhoods." The respondent concluded the MLK street has "strong organization with dedicated leaders and City support (that) creates optimism for the future."

A ninth respondent indicated the MLK street is a "major north-south arterial of approximately 10 miles" beginning at the "historic red line and continues south past the city."

The MLK street description was “predominately mixed-use zoning of 3 floors of apartments over one floor of commercial.” In describing some of the uses for properties, the respondent states the street is “peppered with auto repair and auto detail businesses, small one level commercial buildings with big parking lots.”

A tenth respondent provided the following description:

MLK as a “throughway, almost a highway, that connects a major job center in Cincinnati to a wealthy white neighborhood. There is no reason to slow down, stop or visit. Most of the buildings on the street are large scale office users, universities, or hospitals that do not create a vibrant neighborhood district or a place to want to walk and stay. When the street was widened its name changed to MLK. It cut through an African American neighborhood, creating many dead-end streets and negatively impacting its connectivity to the neighborhood. The city and the state recently worked to build a major interchange for the I71 interstate. This further eroded the fabric of two African American neighborhoods adjacent to the interstate and along MLK. When the interchange was built, it was design build, and the engineers designed MLK gateway imagery which is subpar and cheap.” This thorough description provides insight on land use and social equity in economic development.

An eleventh respondent described the MLK street in the following language:

“Multicultural, light-rail oriented, and historically polarizing (strong differing views of the street from newer and older residents). Seattle’s MLK is a primary commercial thoroughfare through Southeast Seattle. It has undergone significant change and transition over the past ten years as LINK light rail has transformed a formerly

underserved corridor.” A twelfth respondent states the MLK street is part of the Uptown Innovation District (Cincinnati).

The survey responses for questions one through twenty-two reveal several themes. One theme is that significant progress has been made on the MLK streets surveyed. The progress includes new real estate development projects and new businesses opening. A second theme the survey revealed is the progress on the MLK streets includes some negative after effects, such as resident displacement and loss of pedestrian walkability. Respondents indicated MLK streets located in neighborhoods historically populated by African-Americans are changing, in some cases with rising taxes/higher property assessments. A third theme the survey reveals is organizations, and local government agencies are collaborating on efforts to improve the MLK streets.

Qualitative item analysis for interviews. Twenty economic and community development professionals were contacted to provide perspectives on their MLK street. Of the twenty contacted thirteen of the professionals (65%) agreed to be interviewed. All professionals interviewed are unique, and distinct from the individuals surveyed. The job roles for the interviewees include urban planning, fund development, non-profit leadership, and community development professionals in St. Louis (Missouri), Chicago (Illinois), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), Cincinnati (Ohio), Washington D.C, and Seattle (Washington). Interviews took place in person or by telephone. Following is a brief description of the interviewees:

Participant Pseudonym	Background/job role
B1	Community Development professional
C2	Urban planning professional
D3	Community and Business Development
E4	Executive Director – Main Street
F5	Economic Development Practitioner
G6	Property and Business Owner
H7	Executive Director – Business Association
I8	Public Works, Real Estate professional, Attorney
J9	Executive Director – Community Development professional
K10	Executive Director – Community Development professional
L11	Community Development Consultant
M12	Government, Grants Manager, Banking professional
N13	Executive Director, Attorney, Community Development

Figure 1: Participant pseudonym and background/job roles.

The primary central themes revealed through interviews were:

- Gentrification impacts MLK neighborhoods
- Diverse capital sources drive MLK street revitalization
- MLK streets lack business sustainability strategies
- Transportation modes affect MLK street experience
- Stigma of crime impacts quality of life on MLK streets

The subthemes from the interviews were as follows:

- Mission alignment solidifying concerted efforts on MLK streets
- Prosperity unrealized for long-term MLK street residents and businesses
- Patient interest for revitalized MLK streets

Gentrification impacts MLK streets. The first theme found in the interviews pertained to how gentrification is impacting MLK streets. Interviewee E4 stated:

“housing projects are shutting down to give land to larger developers to build, causing people to be moved out. African-Americans are not there because the projects were not built for them. Most wait for whites to come in to develop and have vision. MLK street residents should demand that projects be led by African-Americans developers.”

Interviewee F5 commented “there were many displacements, public housing is gone. Residents had to move to other neighborhoods. Many residents that only knew public housing now placed in areas not used to.” Interviewee H7 shared the following:

“public housing residents were displaced. There were 3,000 residents, but 2,500 units were demolished. There was supposed to do a one for one replacement. Developers do not have to include low income housing. Apartment rents are \$1,500 per month.”

Interviewee J9 commented “low income residents are being displaced. Property value has gone up.” Another interviewee, K10, stated, “there is a fair amount of frustration around gentrification as there is a struggle to keep local people who have been there.” One interviewee, L11, stated “people are concerned the area is gentrifying, becoming a hot market. This is generating pressure on property values.”

Diverse capital sources drive MLK street revitalization. A second theme revealed through the interviews was MLK street revitalization is occurring through a mix of funding sources. One interviewee, C2, stated projects used “historic tax credits (HTC), low income housing tax credits (LIHTC), and tax abatement from City.” Another interviewee, D3, stated, “federal transit authority funds were used to build a highway” on the MLK street.

Interviewee E4 commented the MLK street used “great streets funding and urban development block grants” and “opportunity zones funds are the newest.” Interviewee F5 named “LIHTC, tax increment financing (TIF), new markets tax credits (NMTC), and funds from the state” were instrumental in projects on the MLK street. Interviewee N13 stated the funding sources used on the MLK street included “LIHTC, NMTC, private equity, and community development finance institution (CDFI) funds.”

Another interviewee, H7, stated, “TIF and Small Business Improvement Funds (SBIF) were used on MLK street projects.” Interviewee I8 added that “private equity, city funds, Catholic Community Services, and Seattle Housing Authority funds” were used on the MLK street. Interviewee J9 named “LIHTC, Hope 6, NMTC and philanthropic funds.” J9 also stated, “Steve Balmer Foundation is becoming an economic development driver.” An interviewee, K10, named “LIHTC, and federal and county funding sources, NMTC, and bond financing by city and county” as instrumental to completing projects on the MLK street. One of the interviewees, L11, named the following list of funding mechanisms used for projects on the MLK street:

“Historic tax credits, low-income (LIHTC), state bond financing, TIF, philanthropic grant, program related investments (PRI), home funds, CDBG, federal home loan bank funds, and conventional financing.”

MLK streets lack business sustainability strategies. A third theme expressed through the interviews was the MLK street lack strategies to sustain local businesses. Interviewees C2, F5, G6, I8, K10 were all unaware of efforts to recruit businesses to the respective MLK streets. One interviewee, B10, commented that attempts were “started to bring businesses but the efforts dwindled.” Another interviewee, K10, stated they were “unaware of business recruitment

efforts, but there have been efforts.” Interviewee J9 responded there is “no active business recruitment efforts. Rents are going up for commercial space. Amazon workers that came in are not supporting local businesses.” J9 added “no commercial space available (was) affordable or viable.”

Some outliers offered alternative responses. For example, interviewee D3 stated organizations like “Web Ventures and Mortar – Uptown Consortium, create a business pipeline.” Another interviewee, E4, stated business recruitment efforts were the result of “market forces working.” Another outlier was the response from interviewee L11 who stated the business recruitment efforts is the “work of the business improvement district who is promoting the neighborhood and making referrals to property owners.” A final interviewee, M12, stated the “business improvement district (BID) is active in filling spaces.”

Transportation modes affect MLK street experience. A fourth theme was MLK street experiences were affected by the modes of transportation available on the street. Interviewee C8 stated the “bus line is the only public transportation. The poorest people ride the bus, and the frequency is not great.” One interviewee, D3, commented the “bus system needs to be improved. There are no bike routes.” Another one of the interviewees, E4, reported there are “bikeshare connections, zip car, different forms of transportation are working together.” Interviewee J9 “Transit wants to spend money on rail tracks, and there is lack of pedestrian friendly sidewalks. Seattle is a big bike town, but not coordinated. High bike use, but few bike lanes on MLK Way.” The comment by interviewee L11 was “the idea of changing from four lanes to two lanes, one in each direction, will make the street more pedestrian friendly.”

Interviewee I8 responded with the following statement:

“Some portions of MLK Way have bikeshare but has a messed-up street. Safety issues outweigh benefits. The emphasis is on light rail. With a light rail system, it’s a destination where people want to live. Multi-million-dollar homes are on part of MLK Way, and there is so much new construction.”

Stigma of crime and blight overshadow revitalization of MLK streets. A fifth theme that surfaced was crime and blight overshadow revitalization of MLK streets. One of the interviewees, B1, stated the MLK street was a “poverty stricken, crime ridden street. No businesses are there, and you do not want to be there at night.” B1 added there are “murders on and around MLK Drive. Don’t want to visit at night because you might get harmed.” In the same city, interviewee C2 stated crime is “not any worse than anywhere else,” but the street itself was “hopeless.” Interviewee E4 stated, “most of the time higher on MLK and adjacent streets versus the rest of the city.”

Many interviewees did not respond in the affirmative to the above statements. Another interviewee, F5, commented that MLK street is “not as crime ridden as news portray; it’s more perception. Petty crime is not as evasive as made to be.” Interviewee G6 stated, “people living on MLK would say its okay there.” Another interviewee J9 added the “reality is crime is down. Perception is more negative than reality.” Interviewee K9 echoed others with the statement that the “outside perception is a high crime. Inside people think crime is not as prevalent.” One of the other interviewees, M12, added “crime is worse than reality.”

Mission alignment solidifies concerted efforts on MLK streets. A subtheme that evolved centered on organizational efforts to improve the MLK street. Interviewees revealed many organizations with community development missions’ working to revitalize MLK streets. For example, interviewee K10 named organizations working to revitalize Seattle’s MLK Way such

as the MLK Business Association at Othello, Homesight, Ranier Beach Action Coalition, Urban Impact, Southeast Economic Development Corp, Hilman City Business Association, Seattle office of Economic Development, among others. Another example is in Chicago, where interviewee F5 spoke about the work of 51st Street Business Association, City of Chicago Department of Planning, Quad Community Development Corporation, and the Common Council members, among others. In Milwaukee, interviewee M12 described the work of several organizations mission to improve the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Specifically named were Historic King Drive Business No. 8, Martin Luther King Economic Development Corporation, and Bronzeville Advisory Committee, among others.

Prosperity unrealized for long term MLK street residents and businesses. A second subtheme eluded to by interviewees centered on who unrealized prosperity for long term residents and business of an improved MLK street. Interviewee I8 stated “small businesses and long-term residents can’t afford properties. There is business displacement, with properties being taken through condemnation.” Interviewee N13 stated there is “culture displacement, with socio-economic changes; poor people move out.” Interviewee N13 added “for every white owned business, need two black owned businesses” to create a more equitable arrangement. Another interviewee, K10, stated “the light rail is not for low income” in Seattle. One interviewee, E4, commented the “economic portion is not shared with the people. A percentage should be reinvested in the community.” Another, F5, stated “those coming in doing development may not be from the community, and may not be listening. The residents feel left out.” A final interviewee, I8, the following questions:

“How do we keep residents and businesses in place? How do long term residents and businesses benefit? How does the community benefit?”

Hope and opportunity for revitalized MLK streets. The final subtheme centered on the hope interviewees have for an MLK street in their city that would make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proud. Interviewees B1 and C2 spoke on conditions of one of the most challenged MLK streets. The former commented, “vacant lots can be used for urban agriculture and produce.” The latter commented, “there are opportunities for new construction to bring back urbanity.” Interviewee D3 commented that “creating more minority owned businesses on MLK street would be a neat way to pay homage to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” Interviewee G6 stated an interest in “seeing things move faster with progressive leadership.” G6 added that MLK boulevards once used for “coaches and buggy” now “represents African Americans reinvesting and restoring properties.” One of the interviewees, H7, commented that a hope to see the MLK street have “more black owned businesses” and be “more walkable.” A final interviewee, M13, stated “Bader Philanthropies was a positive enhancement on the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. A conscious effort to align with downtown will continue the momentum.”

Summary

Chapter 4 discussed quantitative item analysis of the MLK streets. The tables displayed throughout this chapter reflect opinions of economic and community development practitioners in Chicago (Illinois), Cincinnati (Ohio), Washington D.C., Milwaukee (Wisconsin), St. Louis (Missouri), and Seattle (Washington). The chapter also includes qualitative information gathered through interviews of professionals who did not take the survey. The interviewee answers are displayed as quotes throughout the chapter. Chapter 5 will state discussion, conclusion, and recommendation of research into MLK streets.

Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to research streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in urban communities to evaluate strategies to establish a network of vibrant MLK streets. The literature reviewed indicated demographics, perceptions, and challenges to the naming of MLK streets in different cities were generally the same. The literature also highlighted how physical conditions and lack of economic development on MLK streets devastated neighborhoods resulting in reduced quality of life for residents.

Chapter 1 discussed the business case for MLK streets and commercial corridor revitalization in communities of color. In the chapter, research focused on a rationale for investing to make MLK streets vibrant. In Chapter 2, previous research detailed challenges to naming streets, roads, and avenues after Dr. King; urban renewals impact on African American communities; community development tools, initiatives, and organizations; and the role of streetcar and transit systems driving economic development in urban areas. Chapter 3 described the methodology used in this research, the economic and community development professionals of the study, the instrumentation utilized, and data collection procedures. Chapter 4 discussed quantitative as well as qualitative item analysis of current and desired conditions of streets, avenues, and boulevards bearing the name of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Chapter 5 provided the discussion of results, recommendations for future research of MLK streets, and the conclusion.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were identified at the beginning of the study and are listed below:

1. This study is limited to information gathered from peer reviewed articles, websites, and from the participants who agreed to share insights into the work done in their respective communities.
2. A strong connection between economic development initiatives and organizations working to improve streets named after Dr. King may not be readily available. In the absence of baseline information from which to base the problem, the conclusion results from the information collected as part of this study.
3. This study does not include research on the condition of buildings and local taxes on properties in the study areas.
4. The study is only a description of economic development activities and initiatives occurring in the cities studied at the time of this writing. A review of past initiatives did not reveal a thorough assessment of any city.
5. The final limitation of the study is generalizability. The study basis was on research into a small sample of streets named after Dr. King. The generalized nature of the conclusions may pertain to certain streets named after Dr. King, while not about others.

A new limitation found during the research pertained to survey question design, creating limitations on answers respondents could give. One such limitation, illustrated in Table 3, shows the respondents' rank of desired building element improvements. The survey construct was not clear, leading to respondents selecting all items. The question also did not allow respondents to provide comments. Future research could limit the selection choices to just four options, resulting in more accurate percentages for building element desired improvements. Future

research could also provide a comment option and allow respondents to write about building elements that were not listed freely.

Another limitation associated with survey design is in illustration in Table 4. Respondents were asked to estimate the number of buildings owned by the local municipality. The limitation discovered pertained to there being an unequal scale on which to base all answers. Some respondents answered in number form, while others answered as percentages. Additional research of property ownership by the local municipality could include a number scale or percentage scale from which respondents could select.

A third survey design limitation pertained to Question 10, and the ranking of improvement respondents desired to see. As illustrated, the question requests that respondents rank the top four desired improvements. The question, however, was unclear and allowed respondents to select up to six choices. Future research could limit the selection choices to just four options, resulting in more accurate percentages of desired improvements.

Discussion

Thirty-five economic and community development practitioners received invitations to complete the online survey. The response rate was 14, or 40% of the possible respondents. Of the total respondents, 14 of 14 completed most survey questions, with a smaller percentage responding to open-ended questions.

Thirty economic and community development practitioners in the cities studied received interview invitations. The response rate was 14, or 47% of the possible pool of interviewees. The interviewees completed the full interview.

Quantitative item analysis for survey. The literature review acknowledged that urban renewal negatively impacted MLK streets and urban neighborhoods (Wolf & LeBeaux, 1967).

The planned creation of highways documented in the literature resulted in the creation of vacant parcels. The research indicated tools such as tax increment finance were established by municipalities to incentivize the private sector to address the blighted conditions (Reinert, 2001). The removal of buildings left blighted properties, including both vacant buildings and vacant lots. Survey respondents acknowledged the negative impacts vacant lots have on MLK streets. As illustrated in Table 7, 57% of respondents estimated five to nine lots were vacant; another 14% estimated ten to fifteen lots were vacant, and 22% of the respondents estimated there were sixteen or more lots vacant. As Table 13 displayed, 79% of the respondents desired retail stores on the MLK street; 93% desired restaurants, and 86% desired family entertainment. The blighted buildings and vacant lots present an opportunity to be repurposed for uses needed and desired by residents.

The literature documented conditions that were discouraging people from walking along an MLK street, noting there were many surface parking lots, unattractive streetscapes and absence of a sense of place (Cincinnati Business Courier, 2014, para 3). The results shown in Table 1 indicate 86% of respondents estimated more than 45 buildings were on MLK street. Table 2 displayed the similarities of disrepair plaguing buildings on MLK streets. An estimated 57% of the respondents indicated between 21% and 60% of the properties were in disrepair, and 42.86% of the respondents estimated between 0% and 20% of the properties were in disrepair. The data reflecting vacant lots and buildings in disrepair suggests MLK streets could benefit from a redevelopment strategy. The data also suggests that if left alone or without incentive for improvement, more properties may suffer from neglect resulting in continual blighted conditions.

Table 11 shows 50% of survey respondents rated the local economic development agency involvement in MLK streets high, while 43% of survey respondents rated the local economic

development agency involvement as minimal. The data suggests in some cities the local economic development agency is active, but this is only one facet of the revitalization team. The absence of communication among the existing network of MLK street revitalization practitioners leaves the door open for urban renewal practices to succumb streets bearing the name of Dr. King.

The literature review indicated that streetcars spurred economic development while bringing new residents, new businesses and new workers to areas (Culver, 2017). The survey responses in Table 18 display results indicating 29% of respondents reported rising rents on the MLK street studied, and 79% reported new housing units developed on the MLK street.

Qualitative item analysis for survey central themes. The literature review identified the emergence of publicly sanctioned special districts termed business improvement districts, (BIDs) as entrepreneurial place management agents working on behalf of property owners as economic development ambassadors (Ruffin, 2010; Lippert & Sleiman, 2012). One survey respondent commented MLK street “needs more community support, and better connectivity and partnerships between businesses.” The survey respondents did not specifically state any specific agency type was best to work on behalf of the property owners. Notwithstanding, 50% of the respondents classified their organization as a business improvement district, while 44% and 40% respectively identified as economic development corporations and community development corporations.

The literature review documented the creation of funding sources available to property owners including New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) and tax increment financing (TIF) (La Franchi, 2010, p5; Lester, 2014). The literature review also identified grants, micro loans, and other funding tools to improve buildings on MLK streets. One of the survey respondents

described the challenge to property owners accessing the tools as a “lack of mass communication” about awareness of funding availability. One survey respondent stated most property owners are not “aware of the grants offered by the city and don’t know to ask if there are grants available, or who to ask for that matter.” Another respondent shared “building owners need to do a lot of research” to find out about monies available to improve buildings. Nearly half of the interview respondents were unaware of property owner engagement, while several others suggested property owner participation in revitalization efforts was minimal. A concerted effort to engage property owners could prove beneficial to MLK street revitalization efforts.

As previously stated, the literature review stated that streetcars strengthen downtowns, create jobs, increase tourism and strengthen local businesses (Culver, 2017). Although this is often the case, the benefits documented come with disadvantages. Nearly 70% of interviewees expressed concerns about displacement on the MLK street in the cities studied. The balance needed in economic development is to minimize displacement of residents in the process.

Qualitative item analysis for interview central themes. The literature review revealed the United States government recognized Dr. King’s greatness by establishing a federal holiday on his birthday (Straus, 2014), and that defining the historical significance of Dr. King remains with individuals that study or carry on King’s work (Carson & Holloran, 1991). The literature also revealed the commemoration of Dr. King’s life with streets renaming included racial tensions and opposition from businesses (Alderman, 2008). Interview responses were inconclusive on whether this was the case in the various cities. In Chicago and Washington D.C. interviewees shared that street renaming was not controversial. In Milwaukee and Seattle, however, interviewees shared there was some controversy from business owners. In St. Louis Interviewee B1 reported the “renaming took a while to get done.”

The literature review identified various organizations working in urban areas to revitalize MLK streets in the neighborhood where African Americans are the dominant population. The literature also documented the sentiment of residents in various cities that believe streets named after Dr. King provided a sense of history and togetherness (Tilove, 2003). Additionally, the literature provided an example of a partnership of cities, colleges, and residents as a wholistic approach to improving the neighborhood surrounding the MLK street (Duffy and Coddling, 2016). Interview data confirmed that such an approach was ideal for improving MLK streets. Various organizations including community development agencies, real estate developers and government identified in the interviews work to improve MLK streets, and surrounding neighborhoods in the cities studied. For example, in Seattle Interviewee J9 named MLK street revitalization included involvement by MLK Business Association, Homesight™, Ranier Beach Action Coalition, and the City of Seattle. In Chicago Interviewee F5 stated commercial district revitalization is a focused on by Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), Illinois Facility Fund, Chicago Neighborhood Initiative, and Chicago Opportunities Fund, among others. Although many organizations are working on MLK street improvement efforts, neither the literature or interview data identified an ongoing comprehensive, coordinated improvement plan for MLK streets. Several interviewees suggested there may be a lack of coordinated leadership to revitalize MLK streets. Interviewee G6 stated, “elected official involvement is needed to advance King Drive.” Interviewee E4 there are “opportunities to pull people together to focus on revitalization.”

The literature review indicated community development agencies, economic development professionals, government, and the private sector play critical roles in the revitalization of MLK streets and urban commercial corridors in cities nationwide (Duffy &

Codding, 2016; Reinert, 2001). Interview data confirmed elected officials, city planning departments, universities, community development financial institutions (CDFIs), and Quality of Life plans are each critical to the pursuit of revitalized MLK streets. The interviews also indicated the collective unaddressed issues on some MLK streets included traffic and pedestrian safety, vacant lot development, business recruitment and funding for economic development. Interviewee L4 stated there are “a lot of vacant lots, but these are also opportunities.” Interviewee N4 indicated “pedestrians have trouble crossing the street.” Interviewees added that organizations, government, and the private sector worked in silos, minimizing the collective impact. Based on the results of the analysis, similarities in MLK streets can be used to establish best practices and a revitalization toolkit to improve the image, and built-environment of streets bearing the name of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Economic development on MLK streets is critical to removing the stigma of blight and disinvestment. Interview data revealed the hope that residents remain in place while MLK streets and surrounding neighborhoods are in transitions. Interviewees identified transportation modes, namely light rail and streetcars, as having some effect on the displacement of residents. Interviewee I8 stated the MLK street was a “historically African American neighborhood” but is “now very transitional due to new development.” The balance is to ensure that residents who call MLK street and surrounding neighborhoods can continue to remain in place while the neighborhood improves.

Conclusions

The absence of a strategic framework to improve MLK streets nationally resulted in MLK streets ongoing stigma as blighted streets. The results of this study could be used by economic and community development practitioners, as well as governmental agencies to

develop a coordinated revitalization action plan to address the challenges of blight, displacement and business recruitment. The four areas recommended for further research are property owner engagement, funding for economic development and property improvements, gentrification and displacement, and collaboration among economic development stakeholders locally and nationally. The literature and interviews indicated business improvement districts (BIDs), known as special service areas (SSA) in some cities, are among the types of organizations that could serve as a link to property owners, businesses, government agencies, and area residents. Establishing BIDs and SSAs to work with property owners on MLK streets to spur increased investment in buildings on MLK streets could decrease dilapidated properties. BIDs and SSAs could also serve as an entry point to recruiting businesses onto MLK streets.

Recommendations

The research identified recommendations in two areas: what could be done for Milwaukee's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, and recommendations for future research.

Recommendation for immediate action. This researcher recommends the following actions occur on Milwaukee's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. The recommendations result from quantitative and qualitative data gathered through this study.

1. Asset mapping must occur to identify all MLK street stakeholders in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The asset mapping should identify both involved stakeholders, and stakeholders yet to engage in revitalization efforts. The stakeholder list should include organizational leaders, corporate/business leaders, philanthropic/foundation leadership, institutional leaders, government sector staff, law enforcement, and residents. Collectively, the stakeholders should identify the challenges, opportunities, and goals for revitalizing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

2. Document all vacant and underutilized properties in a database that includes owner details, property values, and property specifications. An agency, Historic King Drive BID No. 8 (BID 8), should engage real estate brokers, real estate developers, and organizations supporting the growth of entrepreneurs.
3. In concert with these organizations, BID 8 should identify/implement business retention and recruitment toolkit. The toolkit should highlight funding sources from the government (i.e., city, county, state, federal), philanthropy, foundations, financial institutions, micro-loans, and private equity sources, among others. The focus of the dollars would be for creating and scaling businesses. The funds would also revitalize underutilized and vacant properties.
4. Historic King Drive BID No. 8 should create and maintain a financial toolkit of available funding resources for MLK street revitalization. The toolkit should include due dates and timelines for applying for funding (i.e., new markets tax credits, local economic development grants, CDBG funds, BID grants, etc.). Historic King Drive BID No. 8 could offer technical assistance to help property owners apply for funding resources.
5. Historic King Drive BID No. 8 should create committees to prioritize needed improvements. The committees should focus individually on improvements to the street such as storefront designs, economic development, streetscapes, and the pedestrian experience. A committee should also focus on special events, promotions, and continuous engagement of volunteers. Additionally, ongoing storytelling should occur that keeps what is happening on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive top of mind. Ongoing engagement of business owners and property owners should also occur.

6. This researcher also recommends engaging residents living near King Drive for homeownership workshops, as a strategy to lessen the possibility of resident displacement. Homeownership strategies may include rent-to-own, purchase/rehab, new construction, or live/work. Small business owner technical assistance and education programs are recommended to limit business displacement. The recommendation is for ongoing discussion around gentrification should occur across the community.

The results of the study clearly indicate that Milwaukee's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Drive is but one street in a national network of MLK streets. An additional action that should occur is that those working on MLK streets nationally, particularly in urban areas, begin discussing challenges and opportunities around MLK streets. Historic King Drive BID No. 8 should continue to connect with others doing similar MLK street revitalization work. The intent is to present the results, findings and recommendations to Historic King Drive BID No. 8 Board of Directors at a future date.

Recommendations for future research. The results of the study also identified recommendations for future research as identified below:

1. Additional research into this topic could assist in understanding how to engage property owners in the revitalization of MLK streets. Although Table 8 indicates a general level of involvement of property owners in a revival of MLK streets, further research would help identify if any barriers exist for property owners to become involved. As interviewee D3 noted the MLK street "is a street with possibilities that never met its potential." Any efforts to work on blight elimination and building improvement must include property owners. Further research could identify property

- owner reasoning for keeping buildings vacant and challenges with business recruitment. Additional research into methods of increasing property owner involvement on MLK streets could produce lasting improvements.
2. Additional research into this topic could assist in understanding funding sources available in locations where MLK street commercial properties are in need of improvements. Funds from government agencies (i.e., tax increment financing, tax credits, commercial revitalization grants), project-related investments from philanthropic leaders, and incentives programs offering grants are among the tools corroborated throughout this study's research. Data from this study could be used to identify a comprehensive list of funding sources for property owners in specific cities. More detailed analysis of this data may reveal the need for workshops to potentially access funds, or a step-by-step online tutorial for property owners to apply for funds.
 3. Additional research into this topic could also assist in determining if business improvement districts or special service areas could be helpful to property owners. If business improvement districts are not the type of organization that could be helpful, additional research could help identify the type of organization that could be most helpful to property owners. Finally, new research could aid in identifying specific roles these types of entities could play in revitalizing MLK streets.
 4. Further research recommended pertains to gentrification and displacement of residents and businesses on MLK streets. These study results show MLK streets remain mostly populated by African-Americans. However, that is changing with economic development in many of the cities studied. Study participants identified MLK street changes that included: 1) small business displacement; 2) relocation of

- public housing and low-income residents; 3) unfulfilled promises from real estate developer; 4) real estate development where the community receiving no benefits; and 5) investment in new transportation modes while neglecting existing transit riders. Further research could reveal strategies to retain existing residents and businesses.
5. Further research on collaboration among economic development practitioners and MLK street stakeholders could guide future economic development practitioners. Each shares a unique perspective, with equal motivation to improve the MLK street if offered the right incentive or the proper connection. Future research could determine the structures or opportunities for collaborations. For instance, non-profit community development agencies could partner with business improvement districts or for-profit developers. Jointly the parties could potentially leverage capital sources such as historic tax credits with tax increment financing, Home Funds, CDBG grants, conventional financing, or microloans such as KIVA ZipTM or Go Fund MeTM. Study participants communicated lower stakeholder collaboration, yet strong confidence remained that MLK streets could reach their potential. Future research that includes a larger pool of study participants could identify stakeholders that are critical to advancing an MLK street network.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided evidence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s long-standing importance to communities of color, and state suggests the business case for investing in streets bearing Dr. King's name. Chapter 2 discussed challenges to naming streets after Dr. King along with urban neighborhood revitalization, community development tools and initiatives, the role of business

improvement districts, and the role of transit in urban neighborhood revitalization. Chapter 3 described the methodology used in the research; the population of the study and the instrumentation used; the data collection procedures and understanding elements of a toolkit that can be used to improve the perception and built-environment of MLK streets. Chapter 4 discussed survey item analysis and interviews with economic and community development practitioners. Chapter 5 provided the conclusion of the study of MLK streets as well as recommendations for future research on the topic.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Conduct Study



April 10, 2018

Dr. Jeanette Black, EdD,SPHR,SHRM-SCP
Associate Professor
Program Director-Stout Campus, MS in Healthcare Administration
College of STEMM
242 Jarvis Tech Wing
Menomonie, WI 54751
Blackj@uwstout.edu

RE: UW-Stout Paper on Revitalizing Dr. King Streets

Dear Dr. Black,

This letter acknowledges that Historic King Drive Business Improvement District No. 8 ("BID No. 8") is aware of the project Deshea Agee is working related to completing the Graduate Program at University of Wisconsin – Stout. This letter also acknowledges and affirms our support of the final project. We see the project as contributing to the work being doing for BID No. 8 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin whom Deshea is employed by. We also understand Deshea will use some working hours to complete the project. Lastly, we are excited to see the final paper, and have shared our willingness to assist Deshea in any way we can.

Sincerely,



LaMarr Franklin

Chairman of BID No. 8 Board of Directors

Appendix B: For Survey Participants

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

Title: *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street
Revitalization Assessment*

Investigator:
*Deshea Agee, 414.265.5809
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2745 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Suite
206
Milwaukee, WI 53212
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Research Sponsor:
*Dr. Jeanette Black
Associate Professor
Program Director-Stout Campus, MS in
Healthcare Administration
College of STEMM
242 Jarvis Tech Wing
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790
715-232-5229
blackj@uwstout.edu*

Description:

I am conducting research on the current and preferred state of streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Specifically my research seeks to identify the economic development tools, revitalization strategies, and organizations working to improve streets named after Dr. King. The research is intended to inform a set of best practices that can be used to change the image, perception and built environment of MLK streets.

Risks and Benefits:

The benefits include participants becoming aware of conditions and perceptions of MLK streets in cities other than their own, and potential improvement strategies. Participants will also gain insight into best practices to help engage stakeholders in changing the MLK street in their city.

Special Populations:

Male and female, ages 21 to 80, African American, Hispanic American, Indian American, Asian American, and White persons whose career is focused on economic development practices. The research does not require the use of minors or other special populations. The research will survey adult females and males, ages 21 to 80, with ethnicities including African American persons, White, Hispanic American, Indian American, and Asian American.

Time Commitment and Payment:

The online survey is anticipated to take no more than 20 minutes. There is no payment required to participate.

Confidentiality:

Your name will not be included on any documents. We do not believe that you can be identified from any of this information.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. You have the right to stop the survey at any time. However, should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator. If you are participating in an anonymous online survey, once you submit your response, the data cannot be linked to you and cannot be withdrawn.

IRB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator:

Deshea Agee
414.265.5809
ageed8809@my.uwstout.edu

Advisor:

Dr. Jeanette Black
715-232-5229
blackj@uwstout.edu

IRB Administrator

Elizabeth Buchanan, Research Services
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg.
UW-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751
715.232.2477
irb@uwstout.edu

Statement of Consent:

By completing the following survey you agree to participate in the project entitled, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. street revitalization assessment.

Appendix C: Survey Questions

1. Estimate the number of buildings on the MLK street in the commercial district

- 1-15 16-30 31-45 46-60 61 or more

2. What percentage of the buildings on the MLK Street do you estimate are in disrepair?

- 0-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81% or more

3. Rank the building elements in the order you want to see them improved most on your MLK street? 1= most important; 2= second most important; 3= third most important; 4= fourth most important. Two elements should not be ranked.

- Building Exterior Façade (Windows and Doors)
- Building Exterior (Parking lots)
- Building Exterior (Brick/walls)
- Building interior (commercial space)
- Landscaping
- Roofs and foundations

4. How many of the buildings on the MLK street do you estimate are owned by the City or local municipality?

5. Are you aware if your city's economic development agency has any of the following grants to help with commercial district revitalization?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------|
| Building exterior improvement grants | (Yes) | (No) |
| Building interior improvement grants | (Yes) | (No) |
| Business signage grant | (Yes) | (No) |
| Business job creation grants | (Yes) | (No) |

6. What are the reasons for lack of awareness?

7. What is the estimated number of vacant lots on the MLK street in your community?

- 1-4 5-9 10-15 16 or more

8. What is the estimated number of property owners who participate on Boards or Committees that work on revitalization efforts?

- 1- 5 6-10 10-15 16-20 21 or more

9. How would you classify your organization?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------|
| Business Improvement District | (Yes) | (No) |
| Special service area | (Yes) | (No) |
| Community Development Corporation | (Yes) | (No) |
| Economic Development Corporation | (Yes) | (No) |
| Main Street designated district | (Yes) | (No) |
| Other | <input type="text"/> | |

10. Rank order the following? 1= most important; 2= second most important; 3= third most important; 4= fourth in importance. Two of the elements should not be ranked.

- Improved Street Pavement
 Better Signage for businesses
 Benches
 Planters with plants
 Trash receptacles
 Trees

11. Rate the level of engagement of the local government economic development agency to improving the MLK street? Rating of 3=highly engaged, 2= minimally engaged 1= not engaged at all

- 3 2 1

12. How many businesses are open on your MLK street?

- 1-10 11-20 21-30 31-40 41 or more

13. Following are business categories. Rate your desirability for each type of business to be on your the MLK street. 3= highly desired; 2= somewhat desired; 1= not desired

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Grocery store | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Retail | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Department Store | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Housewares | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hardware | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restaurants | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Live theatre venue | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Children activities | <input type="checkbox"/> |

14. Which mode of transportation is on your MLK street?

Bus	(Yes)	(No)
Streetcar	(Yes)	(No)
Light rail	(Yes)	(No)
Bike lanes	(Yes)	(No)

15. If a streetcar or light rail is on your MLK street describe the positive impact this mode of transportation is having on your neighborhood.

16. If a streetcar or light rail is on your MLK street describe the negative impact this mode of transportation has had on your neighborhood.

17. Which best describes traffic on the MLK street?

- Too fast- feels unsafe for pedestrians
 Fairly paced - feels about right for pedestrians
 Slow paced - Perfect for pedestrians
 Other

18. Select which have occurred on your MLK street within the last 5 years?

- Real estate development - New housing units
 Real estate development - New office spaces
 Resident displacement due to high rents
 Business displacement due to increasing rents
 Other

19. Have the completed projects on your MLK street used the following funding mechanisms?

Tax increment finance (TIF)	(Yes)	(No)
New Markets Tax Credits	(Yes)	(No)
Historic Tax Credit	(Yes)	(No)
Low Income Housing Tax Credits	(Yes)	(No)

20. Has your organization used any of the following funding mechanisms on projects to improve the MLK street or commercial corridor?

- Tax increment finance (TIF) (Yes) (No)
- New Markets Tax Credits (Yes) (No)
- Historic Tax Credit (Yes) (No)
- Low Income Housing Tax Credits (Yes) (No)

21. Name other funding mechanisms you are aware of that may be used to improve an MLK street or commercial corridor

1) 2) 3)

22. In a few sentences describe your MLK street?

Appendix D: For Interview Participants

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

Title: *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street
Revitalization Assessment*

Investigator:

*Deshea Agee, 414.265.5809
Historic King Drive BID No. 8,
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Milwaukee, WI 53212
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242 Jarvis Tech Wing
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Description:

I am conducting research on the physical condition, perception, and economic development efforts occurring on streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The research seeks to identify economic development tools, revitalization strategies, and organizations working to improve streets named after Dr. King. I will conduct interviews of individuals who have either written about streets named after Dr. King or have been involved in work to improve streets named after Dr. King. Their work could have been in economic development or community development on an MLK street. The research is intended to inform a set of best practices that can be used to change the image, perception and built environment of MLK streets. Participation in the interview is 100% voluntary.

Risks and Benefits:

The benefits include participants becoming aware of conditions and perceptions of MLK streets in cities other than their own, and potential improvement strategies. Participants will also gain insight into best practices to help engage stakeholders in changing the MLK street in their city.

Special Populations:

Male and female, ages 21 to 80, African American, Hispanic American, Indian American, Asian American, and White persons whose career is focused on economic development practices. The research does not require the use of minors or other special populations. The research includes interviewing adult females and males, ages 21 to 80, with ethnicities including African American persons, White, Hispanic American, Indian American, and Asian American. Interviews will occur by phone or in person.

Time Commitment and Payment:

The interview is anticipated to take between 40 and 60 minutes. There is no payment required to participate.

Confidentiality:

Your name will not be included on any documents. We do not believe that you can be identified from any of this information.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. You have the right to stop the survey at any time. However, should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator. If you are participating in an anonymous online survey, once you submit your response, the data cannot be linked to you and cannot be withdrawn.

IRB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator:

Deshea Agee
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Advisor:

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IRB Administrator

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Statement of Consent:

This section should include the language, "By signing this consent form you agree to participate in the project entitled, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street Revitalization Assessment.

 Signature

 Date

Appendix E: Interview Questions

1. What were the challenges to naming the MLK street in your city?
2. What is your perception of the MLK street in your city?
3. How would you describe the general conditions on MLK street?
4. How would you describe the building conditions?
5. How would you describe street paving?
6. How would you describe pedestrian amenities?
7. How would you describe property owner engagement?
8. What role does the municipal economic development agency play in revitalizing MLK street?
9. Describe the city's economic development agency grants used to help with commercial district revitalization.
10. What are the business recruitment efforts occurring on MLK Street?
11. Describe the real estate development projects occurring on the MLK street.
12. What funding sources were used for projects on MLK street?
13. What displacements have occurred due to development on MLK street?
14. Describe the modes of transportation on the MLK street.
 - a. Do you have a bus line on your MLK street? Describe what is working well? What needs improvement?
 - b. Does a streetcar or light rail system serve MLK street? Describe what is working well? What needs improvement?
15. Have you visited other cities that have a streetcar or light rail system?
16. What opportunities exist that would that would enhance the MLK street?
17. Share your thoughts of how you the different forms of transportation have worked on MLK street.

18. In what ways have the philanthropic sector aligned with the efforts to see MLK street improve?
19. In what ways have the foundation sector aligned with the efforts to see MLK street improve?
20. What is the community saying about progress of redevelopment on MLK street?
21. What is the community saying about stagnation of redevelopment on MLK street?
22. What is your general perception of crime on MLK street?
23. Describe organizations that you recommend should be a part of a broader conversation on improving the image of MLK street.
24. Describe individuals that you recommend should be a part of a broader conversation on improving the image of MLK street.