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RE-IMAGING A NEIGHBORHOOD:
THE CREATION OF THE ALBERTA ARTS DISTRICT,
PORTLAND, OREGON

by

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Re-imagining a Neighborhood: The Creation of the Alberta Arts District, Portland, Oregon.

Art is often used as a catalyst to stimulate redevelopment and neighborhood change. This often occurs inadvertently as the presence of artists in certain communities can attract both public and private investment to revalorize economically depressed areas. Marginal neighborhoods in inner-urban areas offer inspiration and diversity to artists seeking lower-cost housing. Their presence effectively makes these marginal communities “safe” for middle-class residents looking to live in a funky, urban neighborhood. Ultimately, however, artists are eventually priced out of the communities they helped to create.

The Alberta district in northeast Portland, Oregon has used art to create an identity that distinguished it from other redeveloped neighborhoods throughout the city, having become known as the Alberta Arts District. The research presented in this thesis traces the history of the Alberta district from its roots as a thriving streetcar community through its years as a dilapidated, crime-ridden neighborhood, and into its current state as a vibrant arts district. I show how the commercial corridor along Alberta Street has evolved to reflect the changing demographic composition of the

surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, housing in the surrounding residential neighborhood has experienced a dramatic increase in average sale price and an upfiltering of aesthetic appearance. Many are attracted to the Alberta district for its vibrancy and diversity, the people and businesses that contribute to the diverse atmosphere may disappear as real estate becomes increasingly more expensive.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

What was once a crime-ridden and dilapidated area of Northeast Portland, Oregon where people thought twice about visiting, much less living, has revitalized to become one of the most prominent up-and-coming neighborhoods of the city. The Alberta Arts District, as it has come to be known, has come almost full circle in terms of its neighborhood lifecycle. It has experienced development, prosperity, and decline, and is now well into revitalization.

This thesis serves several purposes, the main one of which is to outline the role of art in the redevelopment of the Alberta neighborhood. I will show the significance of this by providing examples from communities outside of Portland that have exhibited similar trajectories of change through the presence of art and how it stimulates a transformation that often results in the eventual displacement of the artists themselves by a more professional, upper-middle class population. Art is used as both a grassroots tool and as political agenda to boost declining communities and stimulate private investment. Change that has occurred as an indirect result of the arts presence in Alberta is documented by an increase in overall commercial activity and a shift in its focus, as well as an upfiltering of the housing stock and in the demographic profile of the neighborhood.

Description of the Study Area

Geographical boundaries

Alberta Street runs through north and northeast Portland, extending west to east from N. Greeley Avenue to NE 92nd Avenue. The portion of Alberta Street within the study area however is limited to that which lies between NE 14th and NE 31st Avenue. The Alberta Arts District as a vernacular/cultural region has boundaries that are geographically undefined, but can be generalized to the area bounded by Killingsworth, 14th Avenue, Prescott, and 31st Avenue (Figure 1). References throughout the text to the study area, Alberta district, or just Alberta in general refer to area bounded by these four streets. Additionally, the terms district, neighborhood, and community are used interchangeably throughout the thesis, all of which refer to the geographically described study area.

These boundaries were chosen for several reasons. First, perception maps drawn during a class exercise indicated that a majority of people recognize the Alberta Arts District as beginning around NE 15th, yet brochures promoting the district advertise it as beginning at Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Some descriptions use NE 13th Avenue as the western edge of the district. I selected NE 14th Avenue as the boundary because this is essentially the western extent of art-related land uses on Alberta Street. While several building renovations and streetscape improvements have occurred within the excluded stretch from MLK to 14th, there are few businesses that lend themselves to the art image portrayed within the designated study area.

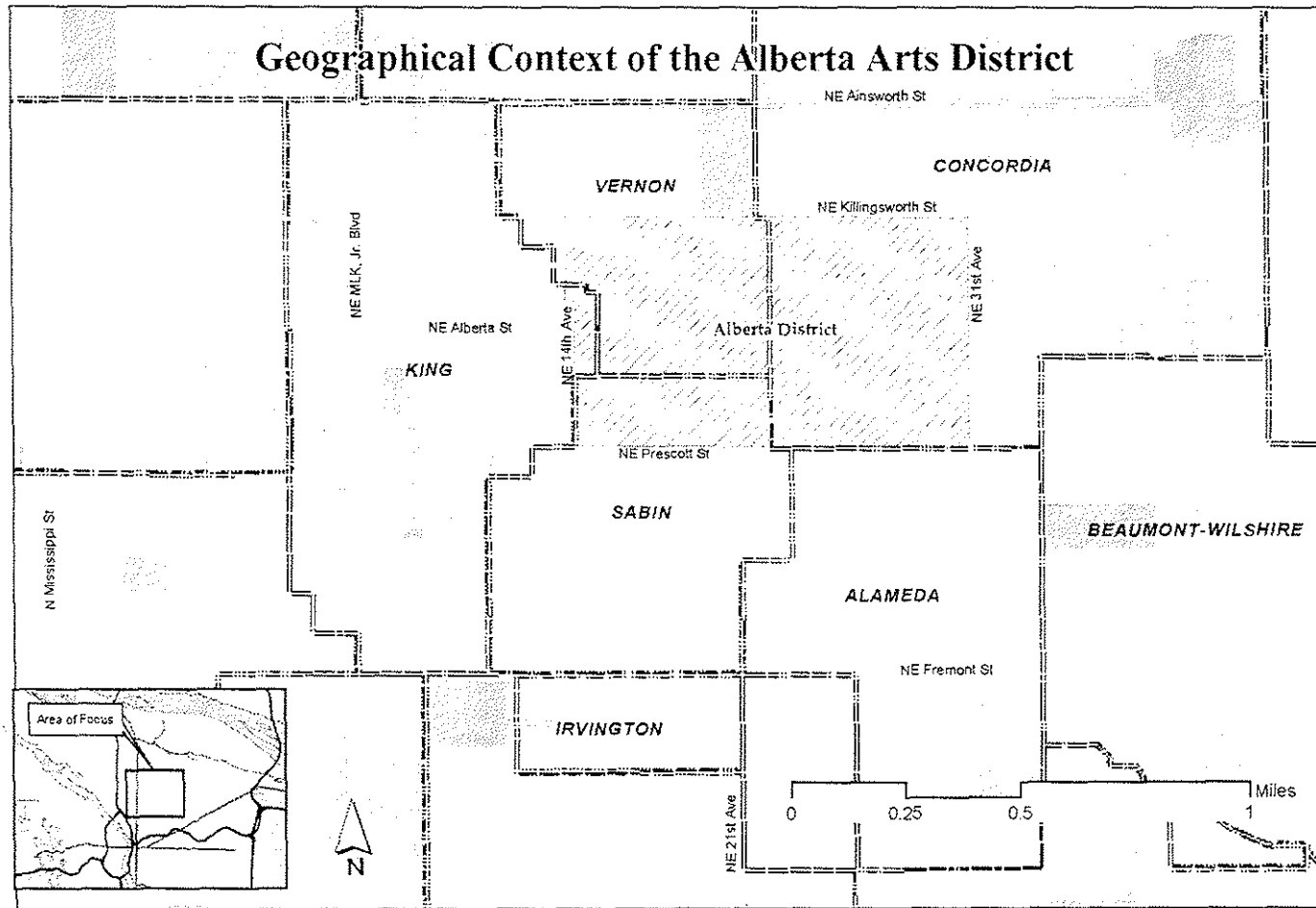


Figure 1: Location of the Alberta district in Northeast Portland

While NE 33rd Avenue seems an obvious selection for the eastern edge because of a break in the grid pattern at its intersection with Alberta Street, I have terminated the study area at NE 31st because beyond this street land use abruptly changes from commercial to residential. Killingsworth serves as the northern boundary because of its nature as a major east/west arterial through Northeast Portland and its concentration of multi-unit housing structures and a few commercial uses. I have designated the southern boundary as Prescott because it physically and topographically separates the Alberta district from the Alameda neighborhood. Alameda Ridge – a topographic feature that extends through much of Inner Northeast Portland roughly from NE 7th Avenue to NE 51st Avenue and from NE Prescott Street to NE Sandy Boulevard – reaches its apex and flattens out at Prescott near Alberta, thereby acting as a physical barrier between the two visually and socially distinctive neighborhoods.

The Alberta district is not recognized as an official neighborhood by the City of Portland, but rather is composed of parts of three separate neighborhoods. Figure 1 shows the relation of Alberta to the surrounding neighborhoods of Northeast Portland and highlights the three that lie within the Alberta community: Sabin, Vernon, and Concordia. The district shares boundaries with three neighborhoods – Alameda and Beaumont-Wilshire to the southeast, and King to the west.

The built environment and physical characteristics

The eclectic mixture of business types and building façades creates a streetscape with an unique juxtaposition of land uses. Remnants of Alberta's history

are visible in several ways, in revamped old buildings and those awaiting redevelopment. Dilapidated, abandoned structures and vacant lots sit next to buildings with restored façades and new construction (Figure 2). Barber shops, automobile repair shops, plumbing services, and taquerias are mixed with organic grocery stores, coffee shops, first- and second-hand clothing stores, art galleries, bars, and restaurants.

The art culture pervades the streetscape and adds to the sundry character of the district. Pieces of public artwork decorate the street with colorful sculptures and murals, and more continue to be added. Furthermore, the business community hosts a variety of art-related events. Started in 1997, the monthly Last Thursday Art Walk includes open galleries, street vendors, and performances. The Alberta Street Fair in September has been an annual celebration since 1998 and includes a parade along with local music, food vendors, and artists. The Art Hop, in its fifth year, is similar to Last Thursday but it is held on a Saturday afternoon in April or May.



Figure 2: Construction of a new office building next to the Alberta Washhouse at NE 22nd and Alberta.

Research Intentions

The root of the thesis is grounded in the presence of art and how it has influenced the revitalization of both the commercial corridor of Alberta Street and its surrounding residential neighborhood. I claim that art was the primary catalyst for change in the Alberta district and has provided a unique identity for the neighborhood, distinguishing it from other revitalized communities within Portland. Literature in geography and sociology regarding neighborhood dynamics and economic revitalization support this theory, describing how artists are attracted to marginal urban neighborhoods for a lower cost of living as well as inspiration. Eventually appeal to middle-class populations who seek culturally diverse communities. Certainly there are other factors at play in the process – economics, business owners, neighborhood activists, and public agencies to name a few – and while these will be discussed, primary attention is given to the art culture and its effect on redevelopment.

I also sought to discover what it is about the Alberta district that attracts people to both live there and visit. Furthermore, why did this renaissance occur on Alberta Street rather than Killingsworth Street, the busier arterial to the north? What characteristics are unique to Alberta that make it more desirable as a street to focus revitalization? To address these issues, I conducted informal interviews with patrons, artists, and business owners on the street.

These research goals are achieved by dividing the thesis into four main chapters that discuss (1) the history of the Alberta district, (2) art and neighborhood change, (3) commercial change, and (4) residential and demographic change. A basic

knowledge of the history and evolution of Alberta is critical to understanding the significance of change in the district. The chapter on art and neighborhood change outlines the theory behind art, redevelopment, and real estate investment, while describing how the presence of art within the Alberta district is reflected onto the visual landscape. The two chapters on commercial and residential change will emphasize how the neighborhood has changed by using information from the Portland Cole Directories and demographic data from the U.S. Census.

I conclude the research by describing the significance of the Alberta renaissance with respect to other redeveloped enclaves of Portland, as well as a brief discussion on the theory of the creative class. The Hawthorne and NW 23rd districts were selected in particular for comparison because they often came up during interviews as examples of what Alberta does not want to become. The significance of creativity is relevant to the discussion of Alberta in order to put the district in a broader context of economic development within the city of Portland.

Several factors contribute to the success of Alberta and its renaissance as a commercial corridor relative to Killingsworth, predominantly land use zoning, nostalgia, and room for growth. First, the zoning along Alberta Street is conducive to the type of human-scale development needed to establish an inviting commercial environment and create a sense of place. Most of the street is zoned CS – commercial storefront (Figure 3), designated as such through the 1993 Albina Community Plan (City of Portland 1993). The city has reserved this type of zoning for areas where development should be pedestrian-oriented and should preserve the historic character

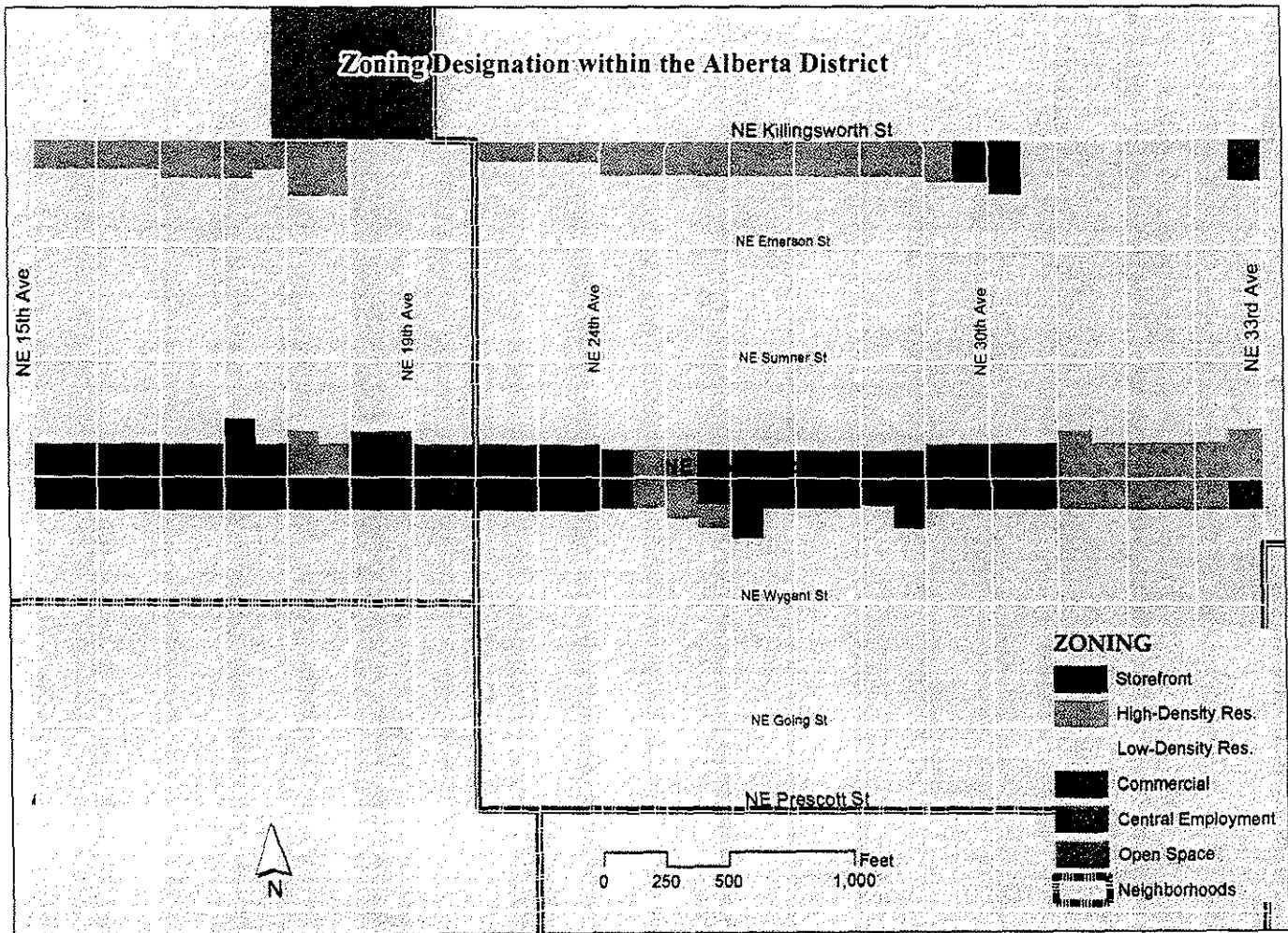


Figure 3: Zoning within the four census block groups of the Alberta district.

of existing structures. Additionally, many of the buildings have ground floor retail space with living above, a feature widely known and used to generate higher levels of neighborhood activity.

The zoning designation contrasts with other streets in the area that generate more automobile traffic and are perhaps more widely noted on city maps as arterials, namely Killingsworth Street. The residential zoning along the portion of Killingsworth that acts as the northern boundary of the Alberta Arts District generally prohibits commercial uses. There are some pockets of non-residential use, the intersection at NE 30th for example, but the street is primarily comprised of multi-unit structures, single family homes, and the occasional corner market. Despite its residential qualities, Killingsworth remains a heavily traveled arterial throughout its course in North and Northeast Portland, which could also contribute to the lack of redevelopment efforts and low levels of pedestrian activity along the portion that makes up the northern boundary of the Alberta district. Additionally, while Killingsworth was highlighted in the Albina Community Plan, it was the portion between North Interstate and Williams that received the attention for redevelopment (City of Portland 1993), an area that also had its own streetscape plan (Senechal 2005)

Second, Alberta Street has a history as a thriving commercial corridor (described in Chapter 2), thus nostalgia has played a significant role in the revitalization. Some property owners on the street have visions of bringing the streetcar line back up to Alberta in efforts to serve as an economic booster (Brooks

2005). Much of the building infrastructure from the street's prosperous days as a streetcar route remain and are used today in their rehabilitated form.

Yet while many of the buildings have been remodeled and upgraded to reflect their historic character, some dilapidated structures remain that have not been maintained over the years and look as though they could crumble at any time (Figure 4). Others are underutilized with regard to the highest and best use of the land. This trend will not continue for much longer though; as property values continue to increase and speculative interest in the community grows, owners of the dilapidated structures will not be able to resist the income and equity associated with revitalization. In fact, the general consensus on the street is that many of those owners are simply waiting until the market values of their property drives them to either rehabilitate the structure or tear it down to build a new one.

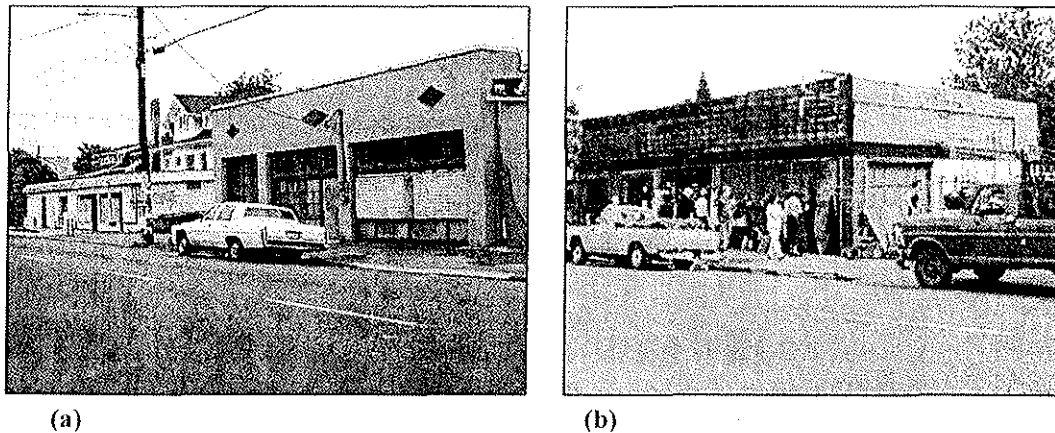


Figure 4: Buildings are being remodeled between NE 23rd and 24th (a), while another sits vacant and unused at NE 28th (b).

This leads into the third reason of Alberta's revitalization: room for growth. Several parcels sit vacant on the street, as do many storefronts (see Chapter 4 for

numbers), waiting for the time when owners can reap large profits from either selling or developing. Additionally, because of the high levels of vacancies and crime in years prior to revitalization, there was nowhere to go but up and that trend shows no sign of slowing down, particularly given the number of empty storefronts, spaces for lease, and buildings currently being remodeled. (Figure 4)

Conversations with artists, neighborhood residents and visitors indicate that the diversity of the Alberta district is what makes it especially attractive. Few neighborhoods in Portland offer the variety of ethnic cultures and artistic creations that can be found in Alberta. This distinction of diversity makes Alberta particularly unique given the predominantly Caucasian population of Portland as a whole – nearly 80% white as of the 2000 U.S. Census.

Methodology

Much of the information contained in the thesis was obtained from personal interviews and field observation. I interviewed several property owners on the street and city employees who played significant roles at the beginning stages of redevelopment by soliciting community involvement and awareness through art. They provided insights about the history of the street and the obstacles overcome to get to its current state. By interviewing artists, I was able to get an idea of how they viewed the art community on Alberta, allowing me to more accurately define the alluring qualities that exist for artists in the district. I asked similar questions to patrons at art events to discover how non-artists view the district and what attracts them to either visit or live in the neighborhood. I also went to several First Thursdays in the Pearl

District in Northwest Portland to witness the differences between the two events and to gauge the perception of Last Thursday by those who participated in First Thursday.

I conducted all of the interviews in an informal manner, not following any preconceived protocol in order to elicit more comfortable conversation. Questioning sessions with the business professionals – two city employees and six business owners – typically lasted thirty to sixty minutes where I inquired about the initial stages of redevelopment and how, or if, art influenced the process. Conversely, interviews with artists and art patrons usually took no longer than twenty minutes, and I spoke with nearly two dozen people within this category. I asked what they liked about the street and what aspects drew them to either visit or live in the neighborhood.

To evaluate commercial change along the street, I consulted the Cole Directories of 1990, 1995, and 2000, following a methodology to similar Hardyman's (1992) study of the commercial gentrification on SE Hawthorne Boulevard in Portland. The Cole Directories allow users to look up businesses based on address rather than name – a reverse phone book. Thus I could trace change by following the threads of specific addresses along Alberta Street. Unfortunately there are holes in the listings, as not all addresses along the street are included. It is unclear if this stems from vacancies or an *unlisted* request by the business or property owner. Furthermore, some names of previous businesses do not describe the type of business performed at that address, thereby making it difficult to fully evaluate land use change.

Demographic information was obtained from the U.S. decennial census in 1990 and 2000. I performed queries for census tract 31, block groups 1 and 2 (31.01

and 31.02), and census tract 32, block groups 1 and 2 (32.01 and 32.02), as shown in Figure 5 to evaluate changes in racial composition, age distribution, household income, structure size, and general population numbers. The block groups do not exactly coincide with the study area boundaries to the east and west, but are geographically close enough to produce a relatively accurate demographic representation of the Alberta district. In addition to the census, Pacific Northwest Title of Oregon (2004) provided a demographic analysis for properties within a half-mile of the NE 23rd and Alberta intersection. This analysis was performed by the title company for the developer of the new building at the southwest corner of that intersection.

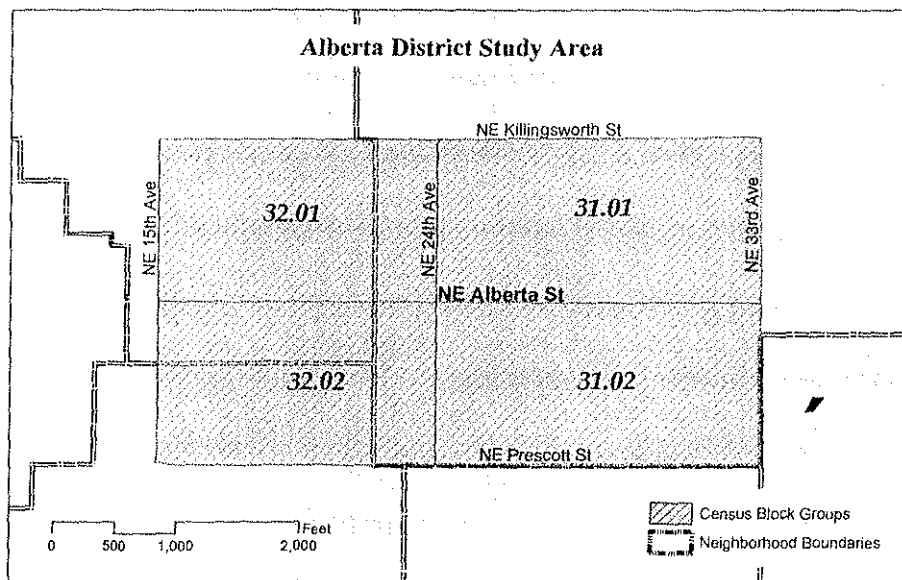


Figure 5: U.S. Census block groups that roughly comprise the Alberta district.

Issues of Gentrification

While it is not the intent of this research to judge the existence or social morality of gentrification, the thesis would be incomplete if the topic were not discussed. Alberta has undoubtedly experienced an upfiltering of both commercial and residential real estate and a shift toward a more affluent and white population evidenced by the increasing number of upscale boutiques, remodeled buildings, and a higher per capita income, but I do not attempt to evaluate the rate or level of displacement, a factor critical to a more comprehensive study of gentrification.

I will address the issue of gentrification throughout the thesis because the topic comes up often in the literature with respect to art and neighborhood change, as well as during the interviewing process and in newspaper articles about the Alberta district. Furthermore, the literature indicates that gentrification is indeed what occurs when artists settle on certain neighborhoods only to be forced out by higher housing costs that result from increased interest in those neighborhoods.

Despite its extensive use in both academic and mainstream literature, the term 'gentrification' is often misused. The word conjures negative images of neighborhood change and its definition indicates a slant toward antagonistic affairs between class and culture. At its core, gentrification involves both neighborhood upgrading and population displacement. Whether or not it is a negative phenomenon depends on the chosen interpretation. Upgrading and revitalization is a natural part of the neighborhood life cycle. Displacement could benefit those people forced to move, as they may find more house for a lower cost, albeit often farther from central city

employment. Additionally, residents who are not displaced and choose not to relocate can benefit from the overall increase in quality of life as a result of better public services, safer streets, and improvements to the built environment (Freeman & Braconi 2004).

Cultural capital and cultural consumption

To answer the question of how art has influenced the revitalization of the Alberta district, it is helpful to put artist-led redevelopment in the context of broader gentrification studies. Geographers Neil Smith and David Ley and sociologist Sharon Zukin have made significant contributions to the study of gentrification that pay particular attention to the effect of artists. Smith (1996) uses frontier imagery to describe the gentrification process, claiming that the frontier no longer involves geographic expansion but rather the redevelopment of inner-urban neighborhoods.

The gentrification frontier absorbs and retransmits the distilled optimism of a new city, the promise of economic opportunity, the twin thrills of romance and rapacity; it is the place where the future will be made. This cultural resonance comes to make the place but the place is made available as a frontier by the existence of a very sharp economic line in the landscape. Behind the line, civilization and profit-making are taking their toll; in front of the line, savagery, promise and opportunity still stalk the landscape (Smith 1996, 189).

Thus, the inner city becomes a land of opportunity for different social groups willing to withstand substandard living conditions in exchange for greater freedoms of personal expression and a higher tolerance for alternative lifestyles. The resettled urban communities often assume a funky bohemian vibe that is reflected in the types of businesses that operate with them (Lloyd 2004) and eventually appeals to middle-class professionals with similar ideals but more traditional lifestyles (Ley 2003).

Smith (1996) and Zukin (1982) focus their studies in New York City, a city widely known for its strong art presence. In the Lower East Side and SoHo districts of Manhattan, artists stimulated waves of reinvestment during the 1980s by combining living and studio space in old manufacturing lofts and by opening galleries and boutiques in the midst of urban blight. The real estate investment that followed resulted in an increasing cost of housing and ultimately the displacement of the artists.

Ley (1996) described a similar trend in Vancouver, British Columbia. Artists settled in the Kitsilano neighborhood during the 1970s and created an enclave of funky boutiques and coffee shops. The popular bohemian community eventually caught the attention of real estate developers who converted aging apartment buildings into modern luxury condominiums. Over a twenty year period from 1971 to 1991, the number of artists dwindled, replaced by members of the upper-middle class, a phenomenon experienced in other artist enclaves in Vancouver as well as Toronto (Ley 2003).

That higher levels of economic capital supersede lower levels of economic status in the battle for urban space is inherent in descriptions of gentrification and comes as no surprise when describing neighborhood redevelopment. What is noteworthy is the replacement of high cultural capital with high economic capital— as is the case in many artist communities (Ley 2003). In other words, as neighborhoods with high concentrations of artists, galleries, and performance venues – i.e. cultural capital – succumb to gentrification, the neighborhoods eventually become home to

residents with higher levels of economic capital and relatively low levels of cultural capital.

The succession of artist and bohemian enclaves into neighborhoods for the new 'gentry' of middle-class professionals follows a certain logic. The attractiveness of these urban communities stems from concurrent views between the two groups regarding political ideology and patterns of consumption. According to Ley (2003), this succession is shaped by the incoming population's "proximity to the aesthetic disposition and cultural competency of the artist," (2540), yet "a lot of people [come for] the lifestyle if nothing else" (Lloyd 2004, 365).

Furthermore, the art infrastructure in place within these neighborhoods offers the new residents cultural validity sought in some social circles (Zukin 1987). Investors use art, both by incorporating gallery or studio space into their design or by their geographic proximity to established art and cultural institutions, when developing (or redeveloping) real estate to attract a specific clientele (Zukin 1982). These development practices have the effect of increased profit margins for the investors, and can stimulate growth and increase consumption. It is thus no wonder that public agencies have begun to use the tactic of establishing a healthy art infrastructure in community development.

Art and the public sector

In depressed communities with low levels of economic investment and, public agencies will often provide subsidies to property developers and business owners with the hopes of a healthier, revalorized neighborhood as a result. It has become

increasing popular to encourage art as a component of development projects to further stimulate economic growth. Cameron & Coaffee (2005) provide an example of the role of the public sector in the regeneration of the dilapidated industrial community of Gateshead in northeastern England. In 1986, the local government began implementing a public arts program focused on the benefits of art to the community. Collaborations between public and private sectors resulted in the establishment of numerous pieces of public artwork that celebrate the community's industrial heritage. In the late 1990s, Gateshead embarked on the development of a cultural quarter that included an art gallery and performing arts center that propelled the post-industrial town into an international art community.

The dedication to art and to community revitalization by the Gateshead Council attracted the private investment needed to stimulate neighborhood regeneration. However there is debate as to whether or not the new housing projects are compatible with the original goals of community development and some believe that these projects have failed to address the social issues of affordable housing for existing residents. Many of the units have been purchased by 'yuppies' from outside of the area as well as investors who intend to sell them at a higher price. Furthermore, the private development "is much less original and distinctive in character" compared to projects constructed with public monies (Cameron & Coaffee 2005).

In the Alberta district, the redevelopment process has been a grassroots effort initiated by members of the neighborhood with visions of a community focused on the presence and celebration of art and diversity. Magnus Johannessen, one of the first

investors in the Alberta renaissance when he purchased the Rexall Rose building in 1993, recognized the importance of art in community development when he began offering affordable living space for artists on the second floor of the Rexall building, an offering that continues today. He was also a strong supporter of starting an art walk along Alberta Street (Johannessen 2005).

As a non-profit organization, Sabin Community Development Corporation (CDC) has used art to stimulate community involvement and pride since its inception in 1992. It commissioned several of the murals in existence on the street, many of which celebrate the cultural diversity for which Alberta is known (Fondren 2005, Figure 6). Additionally, the Sabin CDC served as the liaison between the Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) and the community when the Target Area Designation (TAD) program began in 1995 to provide public grants for revitalization. Following its involvement with the TAD, the Sabin CDC approached the Portland Department of Transportation (PDOT) regarding the implementation of a streetscape plan. From the beginning of the relationship between Sabin CDC and PDOT, Sabin was clear about the importance of preserving and supplementing the arts presence on Alberta Street that ultimately lead to the adoption of the *Recommendations for Public Art* in addition to the *Alberta Streetscape Plan* (Senechal 2005).

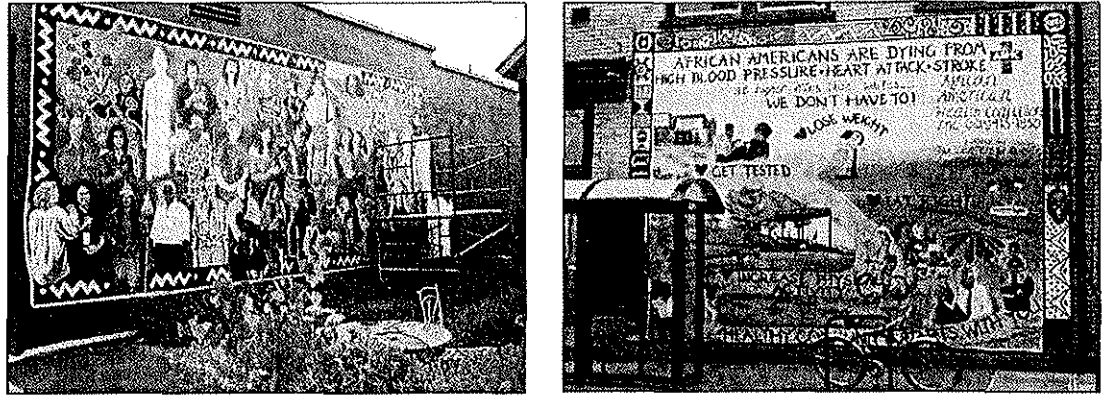


Figure 6: Brightly colored murals between NE 29th and 30th (left) and at NE 15th (right).

While art has indeed served a defining role throughout the redevelopment process by providing the framework and basis for neighborhood identity, the question arises regarding the stamina of the art community. Art production has been described as an “uneconomical and therefore weak competitor for urban space” (Simpson 1981, 126), thus more profitable and economically sensible uses of the land often supersede the artists’ claims for space within the city (Bain 2003). This does not necessarily imply that the landscape will become completely devoid of art related uses, as high art and cultural consumption have proven to be marketable and desirable aspects of real estate development (Zukin 1982; 1987). Furthermore, the transformed communities often remain gathering places for the art and bohemian crowd. At the same time, however, the artists themselves will more than likely disappear as actual residents of the community, discouraging additional artists from inhabiting the newly gentrified, more expensive spaces (Lloyd 2004; Ley 2003).

Establishing a Neighborhood Identity

The Alberta district has become known as a community for the diversity of its inhabitants, its eclectic mix of shopping options and, perhaps most notably, the conspicuous presence of art. It has achieved recognition as an arts district mostly by way of its promotion as such by realtors within the community. Gallery owner Donna Guardino claims she first saw the phrase “Alberta Arts District” on a flyer advertising a home near the street for sale around 1998.

The term caught on. A search through *The Oregonian* archives indicates the first use of the phrase ‘Alberta Arts’ in 1999, with increasing usage over the past six years.¹ One can now purchase Alberta Arts District t-shirts with the proceeds benefiting the Art on Alberta organization. The district hosts its own website, touting the community as the “Ellis Island” of the Portland arts scene (Alberta Arts District 2005). Using ‘Alberta Arts’ to search for housing on an online bulletin board (<http://portland.craigslist.org>) yields sixty-four rentals and forty homes for sale.²

It is not surprising that art provided the impetus for a much-needed facelift in the Alberta district. Dilapidated communities attract artists for numerous reasons. The “possibility of redefinition” entices artists to locate within marginal neighborhoods, allowing a greater degree of freedom that established communities often lack (Bain 2003). Even as the district becomes more popular with its contrasting

¹ One occurrence in 1999, 1 in 2000, 4 in 2001, 8 in 2002, 10 in 2003, 12 in 2004, and 4 as of July 2005.

² Search performed on 2 July 2005

images of polished chic and urban decay, one artist with the Talisman Cooperative Gallery feels there is still an opportunity to be a part of how Alberta will evolve, an aspect that he finds that to be the most exciting about participating in the art scene on the street.

For an artist looking for both cheap housing and an inspiring environment, neighborhoods that have been overlooked by city officials or private investors for development present “a tactile resource, the energy of which can be harnessed to stimulate creativity” (Bain 2003, 311). This characteristic contrasts the homogeneous landscapes often found in suburban communities, leading artists to pioneer the resettlement of inner urban neighborhoods (Smith 1996; Lloyd 2000; Ley 2003). Furthermore, efforts by municipalities to foster the development of artist communities by encouraging live/work spaces often fail because of low levels of interest and low economic capital of artists to live in such contrived spaces that are more expensive than settling in used housing space (Ley 2003). This implies that to be a truly successful artist community, it must be an effort initiated by the artists themselves, rather than one designated by outside parties.

Implications of the Research

Rising interest in economist Richard Florida’s theory of the creative class emphasizes the importance of economics and the spatial distribution of artists. While he focuses primarily on the ability of urban centers to attract creative individuals – a broad group of professionals including architects, graphic designers, performance

artists, and venture capitalists to name a few (Florida 2002c) – I will apply his theory to the Alberta district by highlighting the propensity of artists as creative individuals to attract even more people of their kind as well as complementary commercial uses. In other words, the presence of artists will attract additional artists to the communities they inhabit. Furthermore, they will draw other intellectual types with a desire to be near the cultural atmosphere created by the artists.

By drawing on examples from other art communities outside of Portland, I will discuss the how art changes neighborhoods to become less affordable for the artists that helped establish them, leading to the disappearance of the artists. As communities transform and become a “reference point for city residents beyond its boundaries, ... it can lose its significance for the individual artist. ...In the process, the transformative power of their involvement is rendered but a memory” (Bain 1003, 316).

A comparison of Alberta to other gentrified corridors in Portland will perhaps act as a sort of crystal ball for the district. Both Hawthorne and NW 23rd were revitalized to their current states with their corresponding residential districts following the same path of reinvestment, although neither have histories of as much disinvestment as Alberta. While members of the Alberta neighborhood may try diligently to prevent their community from following a similar fate of gentrification and consumption patterns, the district could eventually demand prices that their beloved independent retailers may no longer be able to afford.

The Alberta example displays how art can shape the redevelopment process to create a colorful, vibrant, and inviting community. Alberta has become a model of

revitalization, one that other communities – such as St. John’s and the Mississippi Historic District in North Portland – have begun to emulate with the hopes of establishing their own arts attraction. Through my research, I will show the relevance of art in the re-imaging of the Alberta neighborhood and why, without the presence of art combined with its diverse population, the district would be no different than other redeveloped enclaves in Portland.

Chapter 2 – Historical Context

While many neighborhoods of Portland have experienced revitalization, Alberta is of particular interest because it lies within an area that historically housed the highest concentration of African-Americans in the city. Its rich cultural past – both positive and negative – differs greatly from most other areas in Portland. The chapter will trace the neighborhood’s history from its inception in the late 1800s, through its period of decline in the middle part of the twentieth century, up to the current stage of revitalization.

The Streetcar Years – late 1890s to 1920s

Much of Northeast Portland was once independent from the west side of the Willamette River. Albina was incorporated in 1887 with a modest area of land from Halsey Street to Morris Street and Union Avenue to the east (Snyder 1979, Figure 7). At the same time, the Morrison Bridge opened to provide the first structured link between the east and west sides of the river. Alberta Street became part of Albina in 1889 when the town’s boundaries were extended north to Killingsworth Street and east to 24th Avenue.

The Steel Bridge was erected the same year and electric streetcars began running over it, providing an additional connection between Albina and the central business district. In 1891, the City of Portland annexed Albina, which by that time had grown to include land all the way north to the Columbia River and west toward the Portsmouth neighborhood, covering a total of 13.5 square miles (History of the Albina Plan Area 1990; Snyder 1979). By the turn of the twentieth century, Albina boasted a population

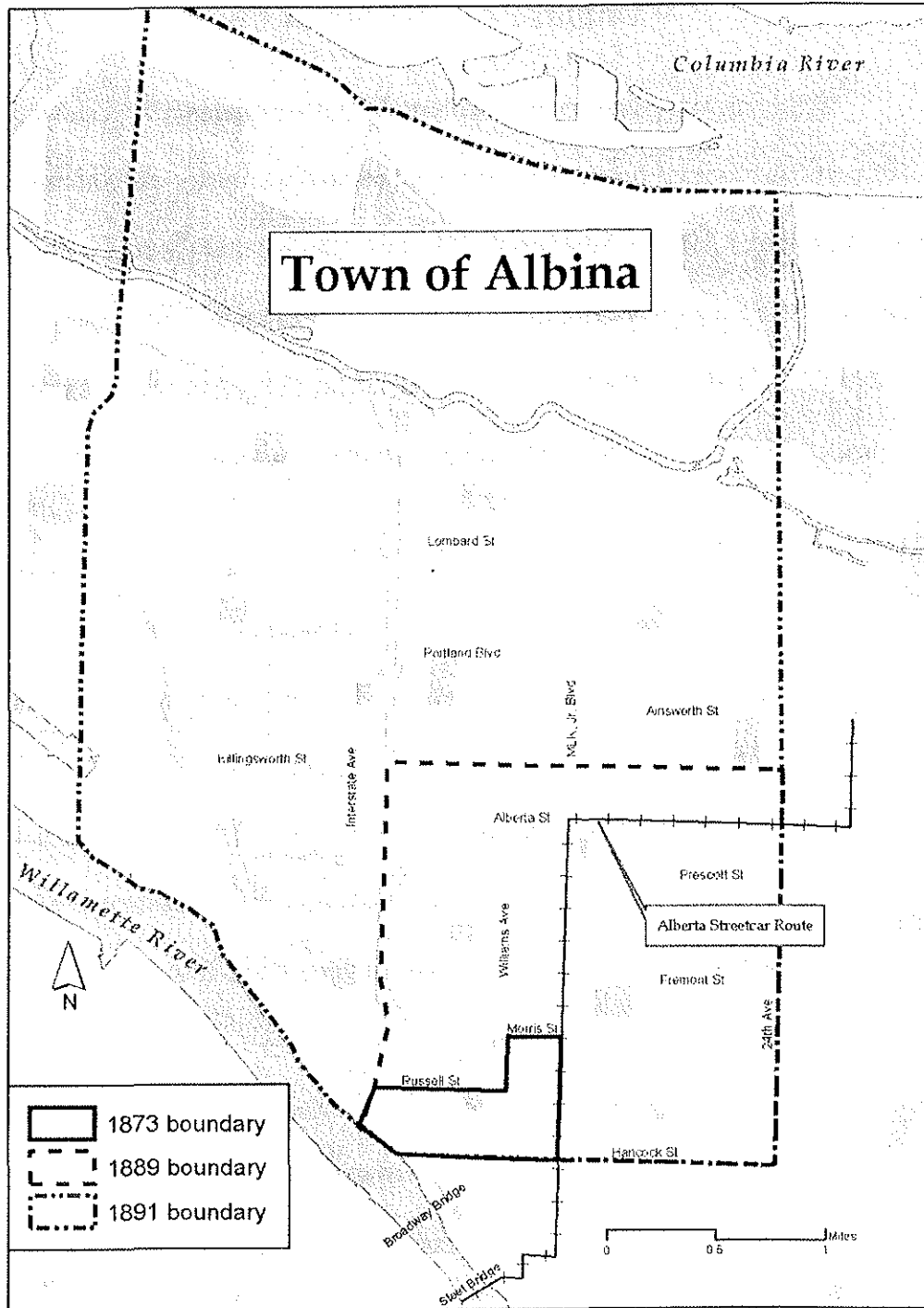


Figure 7: Map of Albina as used for the 1993 Albina Community Plan.

of over 5,000 inhabitants – roughly 18% of the city’s population (Abbott 2001; History of the Albina Plan Area 1990).

Streetcars began service along Alberta Street in 1903, ending in 1948. Soon after regular service was established, businesses began operating along the busy street. Supporting residential developments were built near the growing commercial district. The western end of the street closest to Union Avenue (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.) was the first part of the street to experience development, with trolleys providing frequent service to the area. In 1909, service was extended to NE 29th Avenue where it turned north and headed toward Ainsworth (City of Portland 1999; Figure 7).

Pedestrian traffic increased concurrently with the trolley service, providing additional activity to sustain the economic vitality of the street. Many of the buildings incorporated second floor apartments that allowed business owners and their families to live above their establishments. Neighborhoods surrounding the commercial corridor along Alberta street began to flourish as well, filling up with modestly-sized homes built during housing booms of 1905-1913 and 1922-1928 (Abbott 1983). Housing built in these newly established “stopover” communities provided homes for the many German and Russian immigrants who had settled at the western end of Alberta Street near Union Avenue. With their proximity to streetcar routes that provided easy and quick access to the city center, the Concordia, Alameda, and Irvington neighborhoods eventually evolved from streetcar suburbs to “everyday neighborhoods” that housed families with moderate incomes.

With these neighborhoods established and the bustling commercial activity along Alberta Street, the community nearly became a city in and of itself. A wide range of services could be found along the street, catering to just about every need desired by the residents within the district. Food stores, barber shops, restaurants, a theater, and a library were only a handful of business types that operated on Alberta Street (Figure 8). Religious organizations had a strong presence within the community as well, with institutions providing places of worship for the vast diversity of ethnicities living in the area, several of which continue to maintain a presence today. The Saint Andrew's Parish at NE 7th and Alberta completed the construction of its church in 1908, only to burn down in 1920 and then be rebuilt in 1928 (City of Portland 1999).

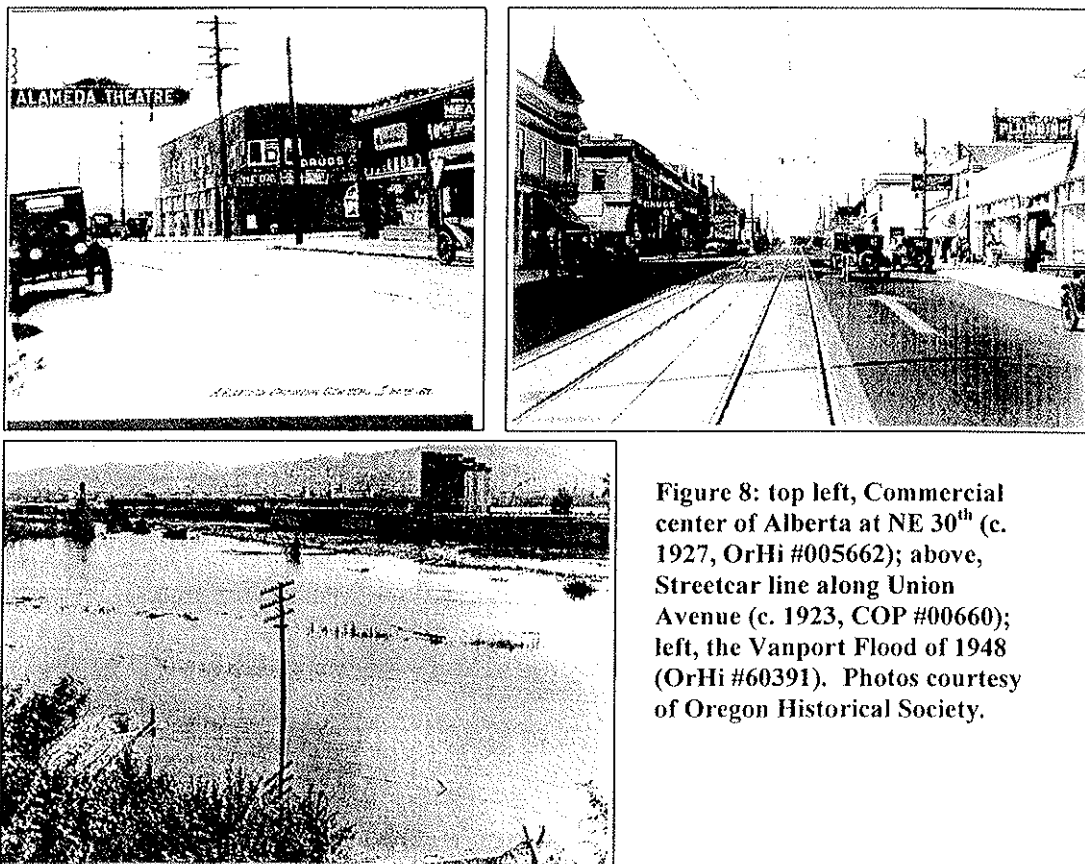


Figure 8: top left, Commercial center of Alberta at NE 30th (c. 1927, OrHi #005662); above, Streetcar line along Union Avenue (c. 1923, COP #00660); left, the Vanport Flood of 1948 (OrHi #60391). Photos courtesy of Oregon Historical Society.

Prosperity – 1920 to 1950s

Transportation has played a significant role in the lifecycle of the Alberta neighborhood. The streetcar clearly had a positive impact on the livelihood of the district, as did Union Avenue, the major thoroughfare (Figure 8). Until the 1940s, Union Avenue served as the primary connection between Portland and Vancouver, Washington. Union Avenue, which was widened in 1929 to accommodate the growing population of Northeast Portland, brought numerous passers-by and consumers through the community who contributed to the economic vitality of Alberta Street (History of the Albina Plan Area 1990).

Alberta experienced significant changes during the 1940s when Interstate Avenue opened as the new artery for north/south traffic to Vancouver (see Figure 7). Automobile traffic decreased along Union Avenue, which meant a decline along Alberta Street as well. The increasing presence and usage of automobiles led to a decrease in pedestrian activity. The advent of buses ended streetcar service in 1948, as the new bus routes followed the trolley line along NE 30th Avenue and onto Alberta Street. Many of the locally owned groceries and other neighborhood services were replaced by supermarkets and larger scale operations along Interstate Avenue (City of Portland 1999).

The community also began changing demographically; the Vanport Flood of 1948 displaced many African-Americans and low-income families from their North Portland residences (Figure 8). Many of them relocated to the Alberta neighborhood, and it became known as an area where blacks and working class families could find less

expensive housing. Albina was already the home of the majority of the black population in Portland in 1939, but from 1940 to 1950 their numbers nearly tripled in size from 1,600 to 4,500 (History of the Albina Plan 1990).

Decline – 1950s to 1990s

Publicly financed projects throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s had detrimental effects on housing and transportation patterns in the Alberta neighborhood. Homes were cleared in the 1960s for the construction of the Minnesota Freeway, now known as Interstate 5. Not only did this displace the households who lived within the path of the interstate, but the new transportation patterns significantly affected the Alberta community. The new freeway essentially shifted automobile traffic away from neighborhood arterial streets, which meant less travel along Alberta Street and more disinvestment (ibid.).

During the 1950s, the Portland Development Commission (PDC) created an urban renewal area just south of the historic center of Albina to make way for the development of Memorial Coliseum, an area that housed a predominantly minority and poverty-stricken population (Abbott 1983). Hundreds of homes were leveled in the process, forcing those lower income households to find new residences. In the 1970s, PDC began another redevelopment project to construct Emanuel Hospital just north of Memorial Coliseum resulting in displacement issues similar to those experienced in the 1950s. Many of these displaced families relocated to the Alberta neighborhood where

they found affordable housing close to the central city. Gangs, vandalism, and violence resulted from the increased concentration of poverty in the newly settled community.

Racial demographics during the 1970s speak to the shift of populations from lower Albina to the Alberta area. The number of black residents in the historic heart of Albina -- centered at the intersection of North Russell and North Williams -- decreased from 5,000 to 3,400 during the construction of the hospital. At the same time, the black population surged from 2,000 to 5,500 in the area north of Fremont and east of 15th Avenue in the Vernon and Concordia neighborhoods (Abbott 1983).

Following this demographic reshuffling, neighborhood conditions became increasingly poor, and banking institutions refused to provide mortgages for dwellings within a broad area of Inner Northeast. While lenders never admitted to the practice, many members of the community believe Alberta and much of North/Northeast Portland to have been "redlined" during the 1960s and even up through the late 1980s. Even though some prospective home buyers qualified for loans that far exceeded the value of homes within the area, banks would not finance homes within neighborhoods of Northeast Portland, including Boise, Eliot, and Vernon (Lane 1990a). While lending institutions claim that this resulted from the low value of homes and the fact that they did not provide mortgages for such low amounts, those who were rejected believe it was simple racial discrimination (Lane 1990b). As a result of the low homeownership rates in the area, the appearance and vitality of the neighborhoods continued to deteriorate, along with hopes for a healthy vibrant community.

Not only did the residential areas lack investment, but the commercial buildings along Alberta Street began to show signs of neglect as well. Many structures sat vacant and boarded up because of Alberta's reputation as an unsafe neighborhood and the low amount of capital available to its surrounding residents. As storefronts remained unused, crime increased because of the lack of street activity, thus reinforcing the cycle of disinvestment. During the 1960s, racial discrimination was on the rise throughout the country resulting in increased levels of crime, vandalism, and arrests. This racial unrest reached its boiling point in Portland on two days in July 1967 when many businesses on Alberta street were looted and vandalized (City of Portland 1999). The demise of Alberta was confirmed in 1981 when the neighborhood landmark Rexall Pharmacy that had been operating for sixty-six years at NE 24th and Alberta closed its doors, unable to survive in the rapidly declining community.

Gang activity reached unprecedented levels in the late 1980s when the Bloods and Crips of Southern California moved into the Alberta district, bringing with them drug use and violence (de Leon 1991). Feuds were at the heart of Alberta, centered near NE 26th and Alberta where many of the gang members lived. Gun shots sounded regularly well into the 1990s and drug deals were not an uncommon sight. In 1991, the Portland House of Umoja opened at NE 16th Avenue and Alberta to provide a home and assistance for those youths looking to leave and stay out of the gang culture (Gilbert 1991).

Interestingly, as Alberta failed to generate community and political investment, public money was funneled into nearby neighborhoods also experiencing blight and

disinvestment. Irvington and Sabin (which has parts within the Alberta area) were targeted through the Model Cities program administered through PDC from 1966 to 1974 (Abbott 1983). Using federal funding, the Model Cities program sought to facilitate citizen participation and generate private investment in these two neighborhoods, as well as others throughout the city. Somehow, even as conditions worsened, reinvestment dollars never reached the Alberta community.

Revitalization – 1990s to present

As crime and neglect reached intolerable levels, members of the Alberta community took action. The groundswell of activism resulted in two organizations critical to the redevelopment on the street: the North/Northeast Economic Development Task Force and the Sabin Community Development Corporation (Figure 9 shows a timeline following a series of events significant in the revitalization of Alberta). The N/NE Economic Development Task Force formed in 1989 as a collective group of community members who envisioned a healthier, more prosperous Alberta Street, similar to its historic uses. Upon its inception, the organization published an “action plan” that formed the basis of the *Albina Community Plan* that was adopted by the City of Portland in 1993 and revised in 2000 (Brooks 2005). The *Albina Community Plan* highlighted Alberta Street as a corridor that should be centered around the development of small neighborhood oriented businesses (City of Portland 1993).

The Sabin Community Development Corporation (Sabin CDC) was established in 1992 to assist in providing low income housing to the residents of several

Timeline

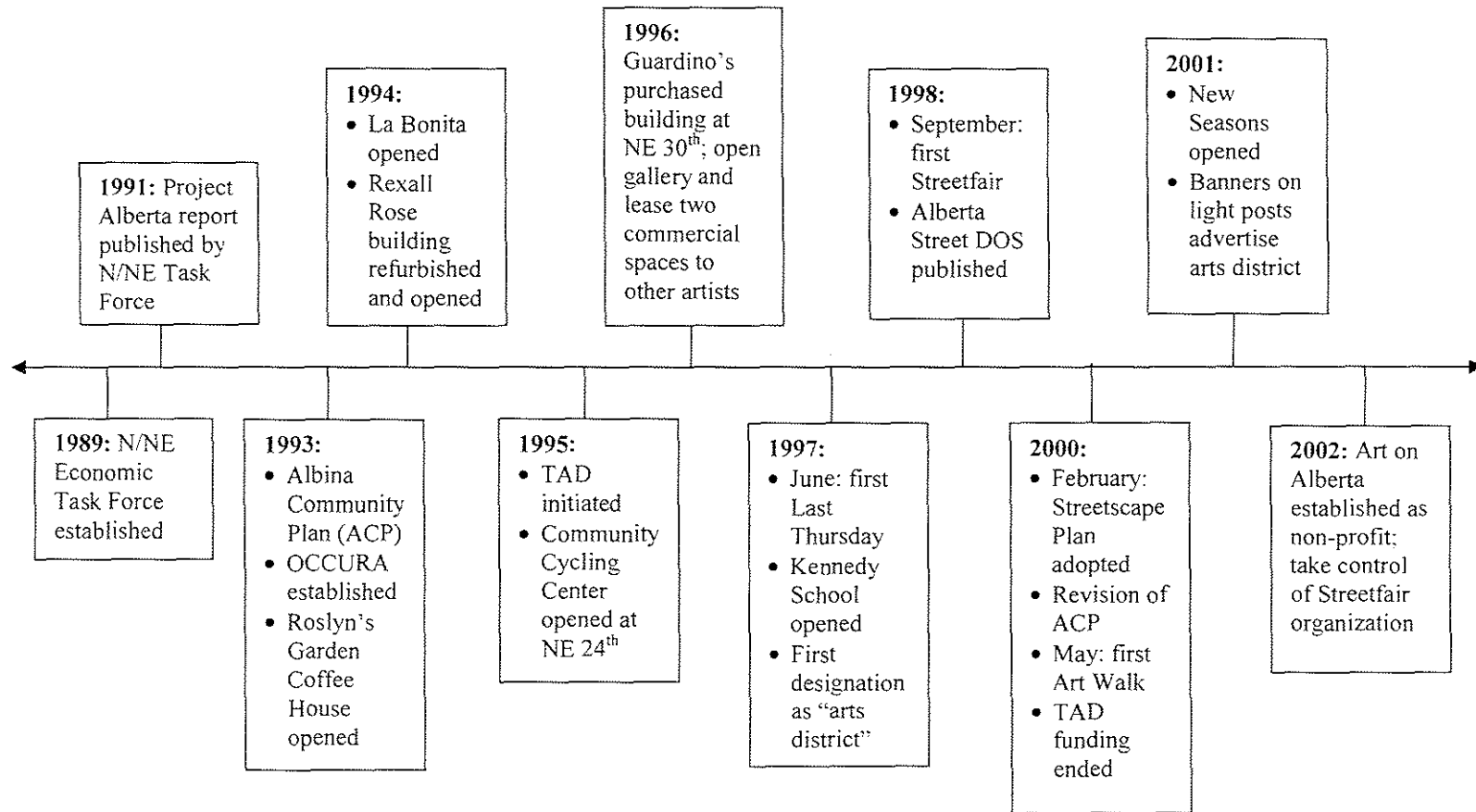


Figure 9: Timeline for events significant in the redevelopment of the Alberta district. Note: OCCURA – Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area; TAD – Target Area Designation program; DOS – Development Opportunity Strategy

neighborhoods within the Alberta Area. It is the only independent CDC in the Portland area, raising all funds in-house through fundraisers and donations, compared to other CDCs that received subsidies from state or federal governments (Fondren 2005). Throughout the years, their focus has expanded to include commercial revitalization along Alberta Street – the “backbone of the neighborhood” (City of Portland 1999).

The organization has been successful in developing several affordable housing projects within close proximity to Alberta Street and has also planned activities promoting the beautification of the community such as litter pickup and assisting property owners in cleaning up their buildings. Bringing art to the community is another goal of the organization, which it accomplishes by supporting and sponsoring murals and interactive exhibits along the street (Figure 10). Currently, the Sabin CDC is working with City Repair to bring a Village Building Convergence project to the Alberta community (Fondren 2005).

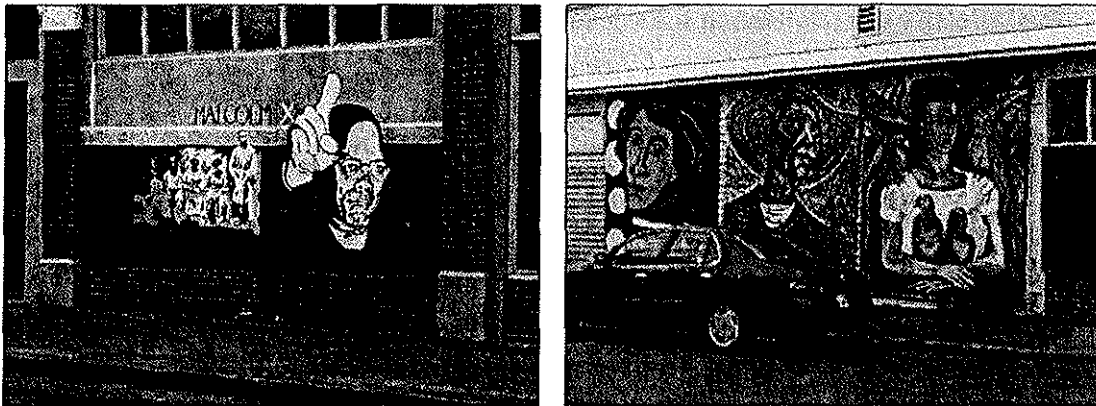


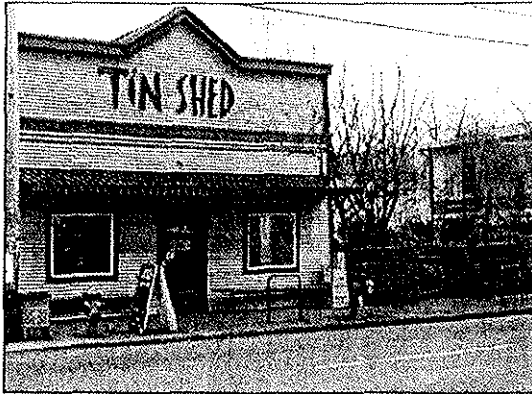
Figure 10: Murals at NE 17th (left) and NE 29th (right).

Several additional factors contributed to the revitalization of the Alberta corridor. In 1993, PDC established the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal

Area (OCCURA) that included the western end of Alberta Street up to NE 15th Avenue. The incorporation of Alberta Street into the OCCURA stemmed in large part from efforts of the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (City of Portland 1993). This inclusion allowed for tax increment funds generated from increased property values (i.e. property taxes) to be used toward further redevelopment efforts along the street and made properties within that area eligible for the Storefront Improvement Program.

Furthermore, PDC published the Alberta Street Development Opportunity Strategy (DOS) in 1998 that highlighted examples of how seven specific properties could potentially be rehabilitated. The DOS had two purposes: (1) to assist participating building/property owners in the upgrading of their property, and (2) to provide examples for future developers who are interested in rehabilitation (PDC 1998). The target projects were intended to be small scale and feasible for first-time developers while fulfilling the demand for local consumer needs that were at the time met outside of the neighborhood.

While this public sector involvement was critical to the Alberta renaissance, credit is often given one individual, artist and community activist Roslyn Hill, who opened the first new business in 1993 (Herzog 2000). In order to maintain black ownership on the street, she purchased a dilapidated building at 14th Place and Alberta from a county foreclosure (Hill 2005, Figure 11). She sought to establish roots in a community in which she saw a future. With the assistance of a Storefront Improvement loan from PDC, Hill transformed the building into a cozy garden café for residents of



**Figure 11: The Tin Shed at NE 14th Place,
formerly Roslyn's Garden Coffee House**

the community. She also moved her workspace from a studio near NE Thompson and MLK to the backside of the café and opened the Shades of Color gallery.

Soon thereafter additional businesses open and the revitalization began, as others shared similar visions of Alberta's future. Magnus Johannesson purchased the Rexall Pharmacy building in 1993 and began renting the upstairs space to artists and a small coffee shop on the ground floor. Around the same time, Richard Sanchez opened a small taqueria behind his Mexican grocery store at 28th and Alberta that quickly attracted large crowds for cheap burritos (Wentland 2005). Across the street, Chez What? served as the local watering hole for residents until it moved down the street to 22nd and Alberta in 1996 and Bernie's Southern Bistro took its place. Donna and Sal Guardino opened their gallery at NE 30th in 1997. From 1996 to 1999, business activity nearly doubled from 60 to 112 establishments providing services from boutiques to groceries to hair salons (Herzog 2000).

The Target Area Designation program

In 1995, the Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) secured federal funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for the use of economic revitalization in blighted neighborhoods. BHCD created the Target Area Designation program (TAD) as a vehicle to distribute federal funds to small geographic areas with lower income households. The two primary goals of the program were to facilitate grassroots revitalization and increase the power of the residents to affect the future of their neighborhood, while taking a long-term and comprehensive approach (City of Portland 1997).

Along with seven other distressed communities, Alberta was awarded funding through the TAD program which would be managed and overseen by the Sabin CDC (Cutler 2005). The program had five areas of focus: neighborhood livability and aesthetics, public safety, youth projects, affordable housing, and commercial revitalization (City of Portland 1999). However it soon became clear that these tasks were too broad in scope and after the first year Sabin CDC, with the support of the community, opted to focus solely on the renaissance of the commercial corridor along Alberta Street.

BHCD also teamed up with the Portland Development Commission (PDC) to offer funding through the Storefront Improvement Program. Part of Alberta Street is within the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area (OCCURA), so the stretch of the street from MLK to 15th was already eligible for improvement funds. By using a portion of the CDBG money, the program was extended to include the entire length of

Alberta to 33rd Avenue (Cutler 2005). Furthermore, start-up businesses received assistance from the Business Outreach Program at Portland State University. By providing technical assistance and establishing mentor relationships, the program proved critical to the success of several minority-owned establishments that contribute to the diversity of business types along the street (Brooks 2005).

The Alberta Streetscape Plan

The TAD – which offered improvement funds from 1995-2000 – and the Alberta Street DOS of 1998 set into motion what would become the *Alberta Streetscape Plan*. One of the committees for the target area focused on streetscape enhancement, and in 1997 they aligned with the Portland Department of Transportation to formulate a plan that would create a functional and aesthetically pleasing environment for both automobiles and pedestrians along Alberta Street from MLK to NE 33rd Avenue.

The overall goal of the plan was to recreate the inviting commercial environment that existed on Alberta in the earlier part of the century. This would be accomplished through street improvements that included curb extensions for buses, safer pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures, tree plantings, and decorative street lighting and furniture (City of Portland 1999). The City of Portland formally adopted the Streetscape Plan in February 2000. Nearly all of the proposed implementations intended to make people feel safer walking around the neighborhood – something that had been lost over the past several decades of decline.

As in the TAD program, community outreach and involvement was an integral part of the implementation of the Streetscape Plan. PDOT and Sabin CDC hosted

numerous meetings where residents could voice their opinions and concerns about neighborhood issues. With the engaging dialogue that ensued, the majority of concerns were addressed and new ideas incorporated into the final plan. The ultimate result defined and outlined the direction for redevelopment. It sought to establish a unique identity for the entire street from MLK to 33rd, while essentially separating but not ignoring the small residential concentration from 31st to 33rd (City of Portland 1999).

By the time of the adoption of the Streetscape Plan in 2000, the Alberta area had begun to make a name for itself as an ‘arts district,’ as numerous galleries had opened on the street and the monthly Art Walk had gained momentum since its inception in 1997. Installments of public and private art also contributed to the artsy character of the community. With the insistence of the community and because of the existing prominence of art, the city adopted the *Recommendation for Public Art* in 2000 as a supplement to the Streetscape Plan that demonstrated how art could be used to create comfortable and inviting public spaces that celebrated the cultural history and diversity of the Alberta district.

Demographics

In addition to the physical changes, the study area transformed demographically as well. Alberta and Inner Northeast Portland have always had a history of being more racially diverse than Portland as a whole. In 1990, the population of the four block groups was nearly 4,500, 44% of which was black; in comparison, the black population in the city of Portland was just under 8%. By the 2000 decennial census, the black population had declined to 26%, while the total population remained relatively constant

– 4,799 in 1990 and 4,761 in 2000 (U.S. Census 1990; U.S. Census 2000). Figure 12 displays the changes in racial composition of the study area from 1990 to 2000. Interestingly, the “all other” category nearly quadrupled in size over the ten-year period. While this dramatic increase is partly attributed to a change in the categorization process on part of the Census Bureau, this section includes Hispanics, which in 1990 comprised just 4.2% of the population and had grown to 7.4% in 2000 and to 8.9% in 2003 (U.S. Census 1990, 2000; Pacific NW Title 2004).

Efforts to resurrect a community that had lost its luster have been successful in attracting new investment, both public and private. Alberta continues to physically change, and the dramatic increase in housing prices suggest that the district has become one of the hottest housing markets in the city in terms of appreciation and housing value (see Chapter 5 for housing discussion). The street’s sordid past is still remembered by those who have lived in the neighborhood long enough to witness the complete evolution, yet those memories become more distant and faint as the demographic shift moves forward bringing with it a different mix of residents with a vested interest in keeping the community safe and vibrant.

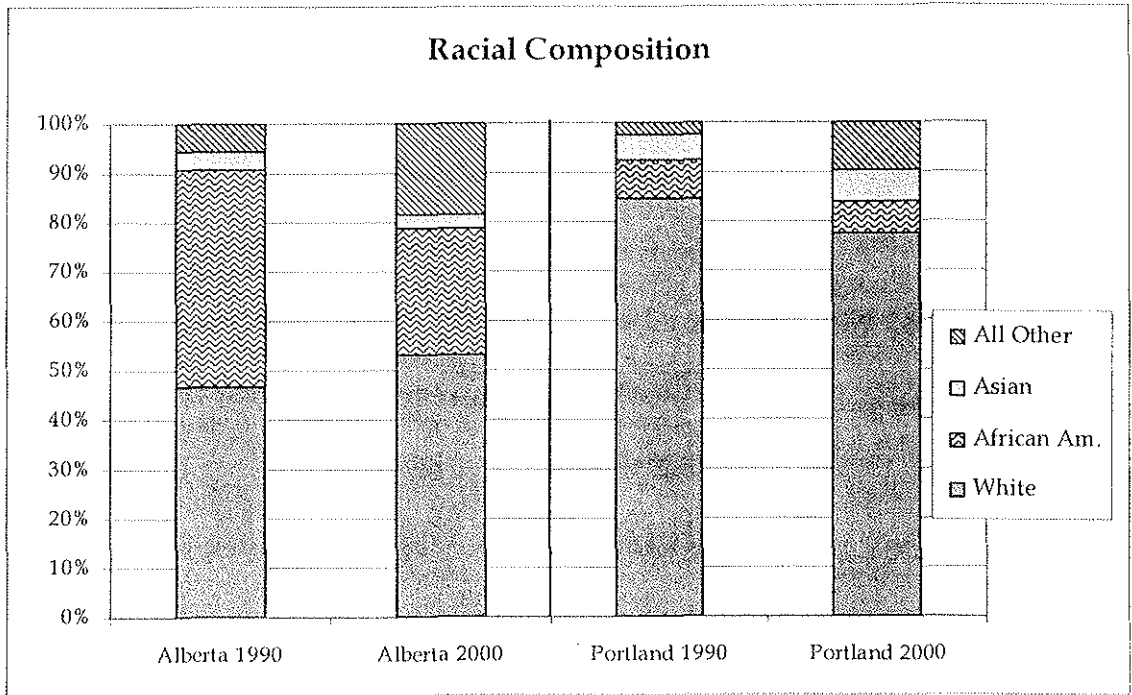


Figure 12: Racial demographics of the study area. Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000

Chapter 3 – Artistic Influence

The presence of artists and art in certain neighborhoods has a tremendous effect on the perception and ultimately the redevelopment of that area (see Zukin 1982; Smith 1996; Ley 1996, 2003; Bain 2003; Lloyd 2002, 2004; Cameron & Coaffee 2005). The Alberta district is no exception. Property owner and developer Magnus Johannesson recognized this fact when he purchased the Rexall pharmacy building in 1993 and began renting the second floor exclusively to artists (Johannesson 2005; Figure 13). This deliberate attempt to attract creative types to the street by providing an incubator space at below-market rents proved to be a critical aspect in how the street would evolve into its current status as an art district.

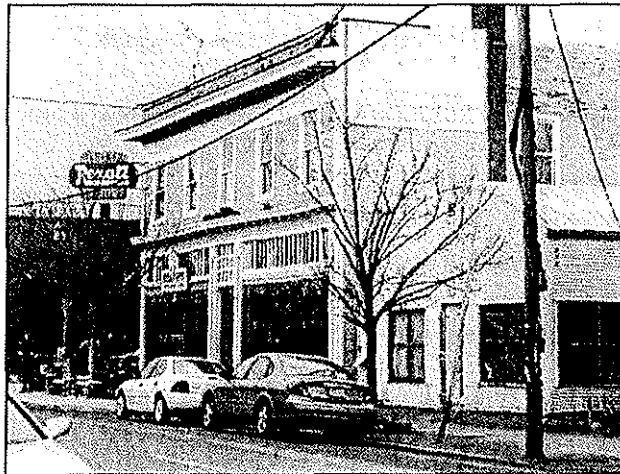


Figure 13: Rexall Rose building at NE 24th and Alberta

Art as a Vehicle for Neighborhood Change

Artists are considered “urban pioneers” in that they tend to populate neighborhoods considered undesirable by most residents because of physical decay or

racial/ethnic conflicts (Smith 1996; Cole 1987). In the mid- to late-1990s, Alberta was such a place, where a majority of the buildings were boarded up and drug deals took place on deteriorated street corners (Wentland 2005; Guardino 2005). In search of cheap rent, artists were willing to locate in a less than desirable neighborhood in order to save money.

Furthermore, the authenticity experienced in such “perilous” communities can serve as inspiration for more original artistic work. Abandoned or underused industrial landscapes offer buildings ripe with potential for cultural revitalization and artistic inspiration. Particularly when compared to the bland landscapes so prevalent in the culturally homogenous suburbs of most American cities, the history and patina provided by inner-urban environments is invaluable for creative types looking for authenticity, cultural depth, and less confining lifestyles (Ley 2003; Lloyd 2002). Even “dirt, poverty, and density can be exhilarating for those who do not expect to live that way forever” (Lippard 1997, 211).

This trend has occurred in cities across the country; New York City is the most notable and well-known example. Artists began moving into large industrial spaces in certain parts of Manhattan that were often still occupied by manufacturing tenants. As more and more artists occupied the raw space, non-art types began to see the appeal of living in warehouse style spaces with open floor plans, high ceilings, and large windows. In the early 1980s, the rehabilitation of industrial buildings into livable loft space caught on as a trend in the SoHo district of Manhattan, and artists were eventually priced out of the areas they helped to restore (Cole 1987; Zukin 1982). In effect, artists

are part of the gentrification process in two ways: (1) by displacing manufacturing businesses that once occupied the buildings, and (2) by attracting a middle class population and increasing the demand for the property. Rents eventually increase and the artists are financially forced to relocate again, starting the process again in another community.

Around the same time as SoHo, another enclave of Manhattan – the Lower Eastside – experienced the similar phenomenon of art transforming “urban dilapidation into ultra chic” (Smith 1996, 18). Art served as a panacea for the affliction of disinvestment as the Lower Eastside began to attract tourists, gallery-goers, and art patrons. The district soon surpassed SoHo in terms of what Zukin (1982) describes as “cultural consumption.” As the art movement became more prevalent, realtors renamed the area East Village to capitalize on its geographical proximity to the already established, high-brow neighborhood Greenwich Village (Smith 1996). Inevitably, artists and galleries were forced out by the high rents landlords were able to demand because of the increasing demand for real estate in the district.

In Philadelphia, the overrepresentation of artists in the Northern Liberties neighborhood resulted in real estate speculation and rising prices (Beauregard 1990). An area that had experienced significant decline from 1950 to 1980, Northern Liberties attracted artists starting in the early 1980s because of its opportunities for home ownership at a cheap price. Many of the artists resided in abandoned factory and commercial buildings that were converted into studios, as well as self-rehabilitated large row houses. Artists paved the way for neighborhood change by allowing others –

specifically members of the middle class -- to believe that the threat of certain areas was false.

New York and Philadelphia are only the tip of the iceberg. Even Portland has its own example in the Pearl District. While there were actually few artists living in the Pearl, it had a "certain bohemian spirit" that eventually caught the attention of public and private investors who made it into its current state of expensive condominiums and chic boutiques selling clothing and home décor (Jones 1999). The Deep Ellum neighborhood in downtown Dallas has a story similar to the Pearl. It was once home to a thriving industrial district until the 1950s and 1960s when the new freeway bisected it from the central business district. During the late 1980s, artists and musicians settled in the area because of the low overhead associated with living in a bare warehouse space (Deep Ellum 2005). Deep Ellum is now populated with living loft space converted from warehouses, new condominium construction, and a plethora of nightlife activities.

More examples of art and neighborhood revitalization exist in the United States and in Canada. The concentration of the bohemian lifestyle in the Wicker Park neighborhood in Chicago during the early 1990s fueled residential gentrification later in the decade (Lloyd 2002). The popularity of the neighborhood was solidified when it was selected to host MTV's reality series *The Real World* in 2001. In Vancouver, B.C., artists populate the Strathcona neighborhood that offers cheap living spaces and an urbane community rife with poverty, teeming with inspiration, and a large proportion of highly educated residents (Ley 2003). During the mid-1970s, the Kitsilano neighborhood -- also in Vancouver -- witnessed the conversion of student housing and

old apartment buildings into luxury condominiums as a result of its high concentration of artists, bohemians, and hippies who romanticized and transformed the community into a form of 'sacred space' (Ley 1996). Similar trajectories of change occurred in neighborhoods in Montreal and Toronto.

Changing Perception and Redefining an Area

There is a strong desire for urban dwellers to be near cultural amenities (Zukin 1982) and artists provide this through the presence of galleries and public art displays. In some cases, "art infrastructure" has resulted in an influx of a more affluent population, and developers often strongly encourage art-related land uses to further enhance a project's lure. Some speculate that landlords often offer artificially low rents for artists and galleries in order to entice visitors and additional real estate investment (Smith 1996).

The presence of artists within a community is a strong indicator of gentrification to come:

The aesthetic appropriation of place, with its valuation of the commonplace and off-centre, appeals to other professionals, particularly those who are also higher in cultural capital than in economic capital and who share something of the artist's antipathy towards commerce and convention" (Ley 2003, 2540).

The ensuing redevelopment that occurs when non-artists move in often results in the deterioration of the art community that instigated the revitalization. Moreover, the very authenticity that originally made the area enticing loses its allure, even when culture is factored into the redevelopment, making the subject areas victims of "commodification" and subject to "aesthetic rejection" (Ley 2003).

Florida (2002b) demonstrated a correlation between cultural amenities and high levels of human capital, so art can also be used to attract knowledgeable residents while increasing property values and aesthetics. Artists have become a significant employment base for tech industries in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, in addition to neighborhoods in other metropolitan areas (Lloyd 2002). Lloyd uses the term 'neo-bohemia' to describe the interaction between the bohemian lifestyle and culture with the post-Fordist, service-based economy. While the Alberta district may not be a magnet for high-tech services, it does have a strong artistic identity that attracts other smaller businesses and results in an influx of community investment.

Media attention and advertising

Media and advertising play a significant role in shaping the perception of neighborhood quality (Goetze 1979). When *Life* magazine ran an article in 1970 about the spacious and unique lifestyles offered in loft-living, it was not long after that the trend captured the fascination of the middle-class (Zukin 1982). *The New York Times* and *New York* magazine regularly began running features on the elegance of lofts and the ability to fuse art, industry, and history into residential living. Realtors play a similar role when they attempt to capitalize on trends popular with artists by renaming districts and offering overly ambitious descriptions of properties to entice buyers to neighborhoods once perceived unapproachable.

Indeed, this is the case in the redevelopment of Alberta; around 1998, realtors coined the phrase 'Alberta Arts District' when advertising properties for sale within close proximity to the street (Guardino 2005). Developers now try to profit from this

new found distinction and have begun to create loft spaces – either for artists or for those who desire open, unfinished living spaces – for example the new mixed-use building at NE 23rd and Alberta (Gemmell 2004). Even rental advertisements use the phrase to attract roommates and tenants, as displayed in the online bulletin board craigslist (<http://portland.craigslist.org>). In the late-1990s, newspaper articles promoted the district as up-and-coming, thus the changes occurring on the street and in the neighborhood became known to the entire city (see Fitzgibbon 1997, 1999, 2003a; Hill 1999; Neill 1999; Amick 1998). Furthermore, the attention given to Alberta Street in tour guides (see Dresbeck & Johnson 2005; Gottberg 2004) adds to the number of visitors to the neighborhood who ten years ago had either never heard of Alberta or would have never gone there because of the negative attention it received in the past.

Public art

Public displays of art – both on private and public land – can be used to generate community activism and pride, and initiate awareness both within and outside of a neighborhood. Lippard (1997) defines public art as “accessible art of any species that cares about, challenges, involves, and consults the audience for or with whom it is made” (264). Art should be indicative of its surrounding environment in such a way to evoke pride and a sense of place. It is used to rejuvenate spirits within a depressed community and strengthen neighborhood bonds (Hall & Robertson 2001). The murals along Alberta Street were used primarily for this purpose, even before the redevelopment process caught on as a trend. Sculptures and other pieces dot the streetscape as reminders of the eclectic and diverse community (Figure 14).

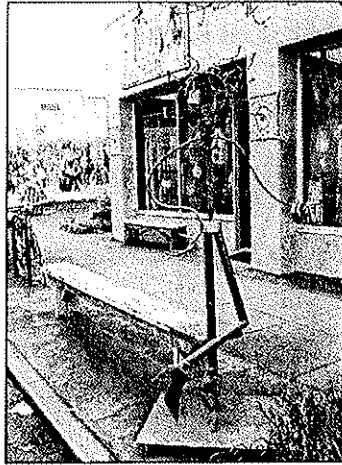
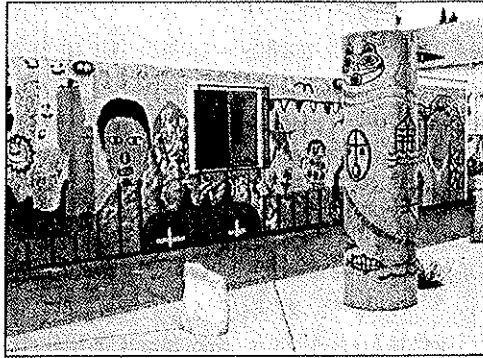


Figure 14: Top left, A public art installations along Alberta (at NE 14th Pl.) created by members of the community to celebrate its diversity. Above, “Wishing Tree” at NE 24th where passers-by tie a ribbon on to make a wish. Right, one of the many “artagogs” contributing to the colorful streetscape (at NE 30th). Also notice the artfully painted bench and mural in the background.

Politics

Beauregard (1990) raises intriguing issues regarding the political perspective on neighborhood change. He emphasizes the link between government and capital accumulation as a strong force of change, a concept also supported by Zukin (1982). In essence, this supports gentrification and the move toward conspicuous consumption. Target marketing of urban neighborhoods by municipalities and private investors often capitalize on cultural consumption offered by the city (Lang, et al. 1997; Clark, et al. 2002). This is a significant shift from the previous focus on cities as industrial and production centers (see Zukin 1991; Lloyd 2002).

The change of focus sparks additional debate over the politics of gentrification in that it challenges traditional theories of development. It also poses the dilemma of determining the appropriate urban policy to deal with neighborhood dynamics. Rather than attempting to sort out the complexity, politicians mask the issue and focus on the positives of change; this results in a loss of accountability and diffusion of responsibility (Goetze 1979). Furthermore, the debate causes tension between proponents of choice and consumer demand and those focused on the importance of capital and shifts in social structure (Smith 1996).

In the case of SoHo, the redevelopment of manufacturing space into lofts during the 1970s and 1980s was a result of intense real estate investment and numerous political gestures (Zukin 1982). However others contend that artists settled in SoHo because of the low overhead costs of abandoned warehouses, unintentionally improving the neighborhood for future developers and investors (Lippard 1997). Alberta has witnessed similar discrepancies in that PDC and PDOT became involved after artists and business owners had already set the wheels of redevelopment in motion.

The Neighborhood Lifecycle

Most urban neighborhoods experience a cyclical pattern of development in four stages: (1) development, (2) stability, (3) decline, and (4) revitalization (Fisher & Martin 1994). Alberta is clearly in the fourth stage, which began in the mid-1990s when artists began settling in the area. As the district became increasingly popular with creative, its desirability gained momentum with non-artists. When the redevelopment

efforts started taking shape toward the end of the decade, the demographics of the community shifted toward an increasing number of middle-class, white professionals looking for affordable housing in a funky neighborhood (see Chapter 5 for demographic analysis).

Additionally, as some neighborhoods in Portland such as Sunnyside, Irvington, and the Pearl District became increasingly trendy and expensive, people began to take notice of the small flurry of activity in the Alberta area. Artists had claimed their place there, creating an alternative community that appealed to young home buyers searching for an affordable real estate investment in a burgeoning district. Several homeowners claim that the Alberta district was one of the few neighborhoods that was close enough to the city where they could afford to purchase a house.

This resettling and re-establishing of urban communities, a process that many describe as gentrification, creates new social patterns and essentially allows developers and prospective homeowners to move in and revitalize the neighborhood (Lees 2000). In essence, artists made it 'safe' for others to purchase homes and open new businesses. Their tolerance, and perhaps even enthusiasm, for socially marginal neighborhoods creates an enclave of hip activity that attracts a "more mainstream middle-class ... oriented toward neighborhood fashionability and security of investment" (Caulfield 1994, 125).

The level and rate of change within any particular neighborhood is dependent upon the initiator and location (Beauregard 1990). Depending on who spearheaded the redevelopment -- be it local government, private investors and developers, or individual

households – the rate of gentrification varied tremendously. All of these players have had pivotal roles in the revitalization of Alberta, and it seems that the changes have occurred quite rapidly.³ This perception and actual reality of change perhaps seems so readily apparent because of how little activity there was on the street in the not-so-distant past. Moreover, the geographical context of Alberta in relation to other neighborhoods of Portland both marginal (King and Vernon) and elite (Alameda and Irvington) makes the redevelopment more evident simply because of the stark contrast in character (see Figure 1 for neighborhood geography).

Political and Non-Profit Support

Community activists involved with the Sabin CDC and the Streetscape Plan were aware of the strong presence of art within the Alberta neighborhood and lobbied heavily to incorporate art and culture into the overall vision of the revitalization. Art formally incorporated into the vision of redevelopment through the adoption of the *Recommendations for Public Art* in November 2000 as a supplement to the Streetscape Plan. The advising art committee was composed of three artists – Roslyn Hill, Brian Borello, and Adriene Cruz – who had played significant roles in the installation of public art in the Alberta area and throughout Northeast Portland (City of Portland 2000).

The recommendations sought to guide the design and location of art in the public and private landscape. At the time of its adoption, Alberta had already

³ Residents at a community meeting in February 2004 expressed their concerns about the ‘overnight’ upgrading and ‘gentrification’ of the Alberta neighborhood.

established itself as an artistic enclave that displayed a variety of creative pieces, both on the street and in the businesses that lined it. The Onda Gallery, Guardino Gallery, and Glass Roots (handmade glass mosaics) all opened in the late 1990s. Moreover, several of the murals along the street had been there for years, many installed without public approval (Fondren 2005). The formal inclusion of public art into the Streetscape Plan ensured that these artistic icons that lined the streets would not only be preserved but perhaps enhanced with additional work. Public art is also a useful tool to strengthen community awareness and pride (Lippard 1997), a goal specifically expressed in neighborhood meetings.

Much of the art on display celebrates the cultural history and ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. The plan emphasized that eclectic mix and encouraged more of it. “Art and color” were identified as priorities for Alberta Street during the design of Streetscape Plan (City of Portland 2000). While using art to create a street identity that continued to express the diversity of the community, the committee suggested that it also be used to make Alberta a “destination point.” This goal has clearly been realized through events such as Last Thursday and the Alberta Streetfair that attract community residents as well as visitors from throughout the city.

Regional Arts and Culture Council

Created in 1995, the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) strives to establish stewardship in public displays of art and culture into all aspects of community living (RACC 2005). RACC works in neighborhoods all over Portland to integrate art into the public eye, and it has had a significant – though not highly visible – presence on

Alberta Street. In 2001, the non-profit organization awarded a grant to the Art on Alberta organization to display banners along the street to celebrate the emerging district. The banners were installed in June and remained on the street light poles for several months (Guardino 2005). Art on Alberta intends to put up banners again in the near future and has commissioned Portland artist Jason Seale to create a unique design that is representative of the 'artistic nature' of the district (Alberta Arts District 2005). RACC has also sponsored several public art installments along Alberta Street, most notably the sculpture at the corner of NE 16th Avenue and Alberta (Figure 15, first panel) that is currently under rehabilitation.

Art on Alberta

A core group of artists have been integral in planting the seeds for the arts district: Donna Guardino, Roslyn Hill, and Allan Oliver. These three individuals, along with business owner Anissa Couey, established the Art on Alberta organization to serve as a liaison for the representation of art in the neighborhood. Art on Alberta evolved in part from a larger, now defunct organization called the East River Art Association that started in 1998. That association intended to be an source of information and support for all galleries on the east side. It was short lived because of the impracticality of organizing the vast number of individuals and galleries within such an expansive geographic area; members felt efforts would be more successful if organized into smaller associations (Guardino 2005).



Figure 15: Examples of public art along Alberta Street.

Art on Alberta was informally in charge of organizing the monthly Art Walk by designing the map of participating businesses that has remained the constant thread throughout its eight years of existence (Figure 16). Since receiving its non-profit status in March of 2002, Art on Alberta now officially manages Last Thursday by coordinating relationships between business owners and street vendors. It is the fiscal sponsor for the Alberta Streetfair, taking over the reins from Sabin CDC. The primary goal of the organization is to “promote Alberta Street’s distinct culture and identity through public art, visual art and educational activities” (Art on Alberta 2005). Other tasks include installing sculptures along the street (Figure 9, second and third panels), seeking grants for public art projects, and advising on the Streetscape committee.

Art Activity in the Alberta District

Last Thursday

Several artists and business owners, conceived by Magnus Johannesson and implemented by Donna Guardino of the Guardino Gallery and Jill Gadake of Videorama, decided to create an event that would celebrate both the renaissance of Alberta Street and the art involved in that process. The Alberta Art Walk, more commonly known as Last Thursday, launched in May 1997. Thirteen businesses initially signed up to participate in the first Art Walk; only one-third of those actually followed through – three galleries and a video store (Guardino 2005). The following month's Last Thursday event witnessed the inclusion of seven businesses, and it grew from there. By the end of 1998, fifteen businesses participated in the monthly event, which extended from NE 13th to 30th Avenue. The event gained so much popularity that by September of 2000, many of the native African-American residents of the neighborhood started calling the event "White Night" because of the conspicuous presence of non-black Portlanders onto the street (Dawdy 2000).

Now into its eighth year and about to celebrate its 100th walk in September 2005, Last Thursday generates involvement from nearly every business on the street when the restaurants and shops keep their doors open later to welcome the art-goers. The event has gained wide recognition and is advertised the best time to visit the street (Gottberg 2004; Dresbeck & Johnson 2005; POVA 2005). Celebrations have come to incorporate marching bands, parades, fire dancers, street entertainers, freelance artists with sidewalk tables, and spontaneous parties in the middle of the street. Lines for a

Last Thursday Art Walk

Thursday June 30th, 5-9pm



Art on Alberta Business members

- WILD CHILD, "The Conscious Children's Shoppe"
1439 NE Alberta St. / 503.249.1030 / www.wildchildtips.com
- TIN SHED GARDEN CAFE, Cold beer and great food fireside.
1438 NE Alberta St. / 503.258.6966
- BOHIO STUDIO
1431 NE Alberta St. / 971.770.7754 español / 971.830.7261 english.
- FUEL CAFE
1452 NE Alberta / 503.335.9835
- TALISMAN GALLERY
1476 NE Alberta / 503.284.8660 / talismangallery.com
- EVERYDAY WINE, A unique wine shop and tasting room
1570 NE Alberta St. / 503.531.7119
- FRANK BARNETT PHOTOGRAPHY, commercial & portrait
1607 NE Alberta St.
- MANDALA
1627 NE Alberta St.
- COLLAGÉ, Creative space & Supplies
1636 NE Alberta St. / 503.239.2190
- MIMOSA STUDIOS, paint your own pots
1738 NE Alberta St. / 503.282.0770 / mimosa-studios.com
- RANDOM ORDER COFF-HOUSE
1800 NE Alberta St. / 503.431.4320
- ONDA ARTE LATINA / CROSS CURRENTS GALLERY
2215 NE Alberta / 503.493.1999 / www.ondartegallery.com
- EMBALLISHMENTS STUDIO
5018 "E" NE 2nd / 503.335.7044 / www.EmballishmentsStudio.com
- KEYSTONE MORTGAGE
5018 NE 22ND STREET A / 503.408.1432
- TRIBE OF THE WINDS
2217 NE Alberta / 503.759.8668 / www.tribeofthewinds.com
- HEALTHY PETS NORTHWEST, Voted Best In Portland
2224 NE Alberta / 503.289.5971 / www.HealthyPetsNW.com
- FLUX SHOES, urban footwear, accessories, and artisan jewelry
2230 NE Alberta / 503.469.0760 / www.polishshoe.com
- RUBY VIOLET Skin, Body & Spirit Care, Entrance on 27th
2641 NE Alberta - 282.8877 - www.rubyviolet.com
- BERNIE'S SOUTHERN BISTRO
2904 NE Alberta St. / 503.282.9864
- LOLD, creperie, salon, small press
2921 NE Alberta St. / 504.750.1415 / www.rovingecho.org
- HIGH GALLERY
2929 NE Alberta St. / 503.493.4367 / www.highgallery.com
- PICASSO BEADS
2936 NE Alberta / 503.494.4222
Vintage, Czech glass and semi-precious beads and beading supplies.
Come in and sign up for a class and learn to make your own jewelry.
- FROCK
2940 NE Alberta / 503.595.0770
Fabulous clothing and accessories for Men, Women and Kids. Featuring
local designers and vintage finds.
- GUARDINO GALLERY
2939 NE Alberta / 503.251.9065 / www.guardinogallery.com
- VIVA CAFE, Serving delicious vegetarian fare and vegan desserts.
3024 NE Alberta / 503.335.8233. Interior designed by local artists.
- BUFFALO GARDENS
3033 NE Alberta St. / 503.286.9220
Organic supplies for the urban gardener.
- AURORA - A SPACE FOR DANCE & MOVEMENT
5433 NE 30TH / 503.249.0201 / auroradance@hexnet.com
Stop by and pick up a flyer for children & adult classes of many kinds.
- MILAGROS
5479 NE 30th - 503.493.4141

- Sunshine Dixon, paintings
BOHIO STUDIOS
- Vidya Hivale, Paintings; Brian Hunter, mixed media
TALISMAN GALLERY
- Frank Barnett, photographs
FRANK BARNETT PHOTOGRAPHY
- Francisco Irineo Garcia, paintings
RANDOM ORDER
- Victor H. Palenzuela, drawings
ONDA ARTE LATINA
- Tibetan Thangkas, Ancient/Modern
TRIBE OF THE WINDS
Heidi VanSchoonhoven, photographs
- Sage VanZant, watercolors
HEALTHY PETS NORTHWEST
Kelly Terent, paintings
FOLD
- Mali Jarvis, paintings and drawings,
HIGH GALLERY
- Lorna Nakell, mixed media sculptures
Clark Tuthill, fabricated metal sculptures
Emillio Berwick, clay
GUARDINO GALLERY

Call for Artist Studios

Art on Alberta is currently seeking artist studios and salon shows in the neighborhood between Prescott & Killingsworth, 15th & 33rd. Email artmap@rovingecho.org

Figure 16: Art Walk map from 30 June 2005 published by Art on Alberta.

slice of pizza at the popular Bella Faccia stretch out the door well past the designated closing time. During the warm summer months, the Art Walk attracts so many visitors that merely walking down the street is a feat of determination.

Last Thursday differs from other Portland art events in several ways, an obvious one being the type of clientele. Attendees of Last Thursday seem more approachable, whereas in the Pearl it seems as though people are there simply to be seen. It is not uncommon to see patrons at Last Thursday (or at any time) with multiple piercings and tattoos with spiky, multi-colored hair, whereas art-goers at First Thursday are more pointedly mainstream with tendencies toward high fashion. In essence, this has been the original goal of the event, as the Alberta Art Walk was created as the antithesis of First Thursday. Not that there is hostility or direct competition between the two, but Last Thursday intends to provide an alternative to the highly publicized event on the west side of the river (Johannesson 2005). Even some those who attend First Thursday believe the Alberta event to be more “genuine” and “sincere,” while other Pearl District art patrons had no awareness of Last Thursday on the east side.

To further exemplify the differences between the two events, one needs to look no further than the type of artwork on display at each one. On Alberta Street, artwork takes on a less traditional style of often low-brow culture. Photography can be seen displayed in salvaged windows and doors from houses. Sculptures depict fantastical, eccentric creatures that evoke images from cartoons or mythology. Andy Warhol-style designs would not be out of place in any business along Alberta. On the other hand, Pearl District artwork is more conventional, more high-brow and focused on culture as a

commodity – culture with a capital *C* that seems to support the business owners rather than the artists themselves (Lippard 1997). International artists such as photographer Nan Goldin and painter Andre Deymonaz have exhibited pieces in galleries for First Thursday.

Additional distinctions exist between First and Last Thursday. In the Pearl District, sellers who wish to set up tables of their work must apply for a permit and are essentially sequestered to several blocks along NW 13th Avenue in order to minimize obstructions to pedestrians and inconveniences for gallery owners. On the other hand, Last Thursday permits vendors to set up anywhere along Alberta Street so long as they do not block doorways and obstruct sidewalk traffic. Oftentimes this is not an issue due in large part to the presence of vacant buildings and businesses such as churches and industrial related uses that close after five o'clock.

Other areas of the street, however, have a high concentration of businesses that participate in the event, particularly from NE 28th to NE 30th, and vendors can inhibit the flow of traffic within these parts. The attempt of Art on Alberta to regulate vendors has resulted in tension between the vendors and business owners. The organization feels that while the vendors are an integral aspect of Last Thursday, they are exploiting the event – and the funds spent to promote it – to increase their profits without directly contributing to the community (Guardino 2005). These concerns are comparable to ones that resulted in the permitting process currently in use in the Pearl District. Art on Alberta makes every effort to prevent the same result, as the vendors are part of what makes Last Thursday unique.

Geography brings up another aspect of distinction. First Thursday has extended beyond the Pearl District to include galleries in downtown Portland and in the Nob Hill neighborhood along NW 23rd Avenue. Even some businesses along the eastside commercial corridor of NE 28th Avenue have attempted to capitalize on the success of First Thursday by offering exhibitions that start on the same day. Last Thursday, conversely, confines itself to the Alberta district and those businesses within immediate proximity to Alberta Street.

Last Thursday is changing however, and it is difficult to evaluate whether it is for the better. The lack of regulation regarding street vendors has resulted in some people selling goods that hardly constitute art and can almost be described as a flea market with the sale of old telephones, hula hoops, and antiquated paperback books. As it gains popularity, it also becomes more trendy. Designer clothing and high-heeled shoes were once a rare sighting during the event; now people-watching from the Bink's outdoor patio presents many examples of style-conscious patrons who have increasingly started attending the event. The owner of Hattie's Clothing at NE 23rd and Alberta who has lived in the community for over twenty years claims she rarely sees any of her neighbors out on Last Thursday. And while some artists are content with and enjoy the diverse, funky atmosphere on Alberta, others prefer the more art-educated crowd in the Pearl District, and those who have not shown their work for First Thursday have aspirations to do so.⁴

⁴ Derived from conversations with street vendors and artists with work on display in galleries, 30 June 2005

The Alberta Streetfair and the Art Hop

Held on a Saturday in September, the Alberta Streetfair aims to recognize the cultural diversity that makes the community unique. It started in May 1998 with the intent to re-debut Alberta Street as an exciting urban enclave (Amick 1998) and was made possible through funding from the Sabin CDC. The event stretches from NE 13th to 30th Avenue with live music and a wide array of food vendors. Now funded by Art on Alberta, the Streetfair continues to celebrate the community's cultural vitality and revitalization.

The Alberta Art Hop had its first run in May of 2000. It was created by Art on Alberta to present the organization's mission of bringing art to the community at an approachable level. The event focuses on interactive exhibits with a focus on child participation. Indeed the number of children on the street is significantly higher during the Art Hop compared to Last Thursday, even though the two events are similar in terms of types of art on display. Figure 17 shows the parade during the 2005 Art Hop, which was escorted by the Portland Police Department.



Figure 17: Cyclists and the March Forth marching band (in the background) participate in the 2005 Art Hop parade held in April.

While Alberta has successfully re-established itself as a viable neighborhood with a strong and unique identity, the artistic presence that instigated the whole process could dwindle as revitalization efforts move forward through this life stage. Property values will rise, as will lease rates, demanding uses that can afford to pay the higher costs, which could mean more commercialized art that is both more expensive and out of line with existing community ideals (Hill 2005). As the area continues to prosper and properties change hands, new owners may not share the same goals and visions for the neighborhood as previous owners or even other current owners along the street, and may simply be driven by profits and increasing the bottom line.

Chapter 4 – Commercial Change

As artists established their place in the Alberta district during the mid-1990s, the Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) directed money and attention to the neighborhood in order to initiate private investment. The Target Area Designation plan (TAD) described in Chapter 2 focused on commercial revitalization, rather than complete neighborhood redevelopment, with the hopes of a spillover effect into the surrounding residential area. Additionally, the *Albina Community Plan* of 1993 highlighted the Alberta corridor as an area of focus for the revitalization of neighborhood businesses.

This chapter tracks the evolution of the commercial district from its days as a lackluster street with boarded up windows to its current state of retail/restaurant chic. The information was obtained from the Portland Cole Directories for 1990, 1995, and 2000; businesses for 2005 were obtained from field observations. It should be noted that the Cole Directories are not comprehensive or entirely accurate, in that an absent address in the directory does not necessarily indicate a vacancy, nor is the function of the business always obvious from its name. Conversations with business owners offered a more concise indication of business types and dates of operation, and that information was used when available. Table 1 shows a general indication of business types during each five-year benchmark, while Appendix 1 shows a complete list of businesses for 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005.

Figures 18, 19, 20, and 21 geographically depict the change in business types over the past fifteen years. The 'vacant/no data' category includes addresses that were not listed in the 1990, 1995, and 2000 Cole Directory, confirmed vacant properties from July 2005, as well as residential uses. Of particular note is the dramatic decrease in 'vacant/no data' parcels from 1990 to 2000.

Business Type/Land Use	1990	1995	2000	2005
Industrial	20	21	15	12
Community service/religious	5	6	7	7
General/misc. services	5	6	16	23
Office	4	4	9	7
Restaurant/bars/coffee shops	1	6	9	25
Boutiques	0	1	2	13
Art galleries/studios	0	0	9	18
Undefined	10	7	12	n/a
TOTAL	45	50	79	105

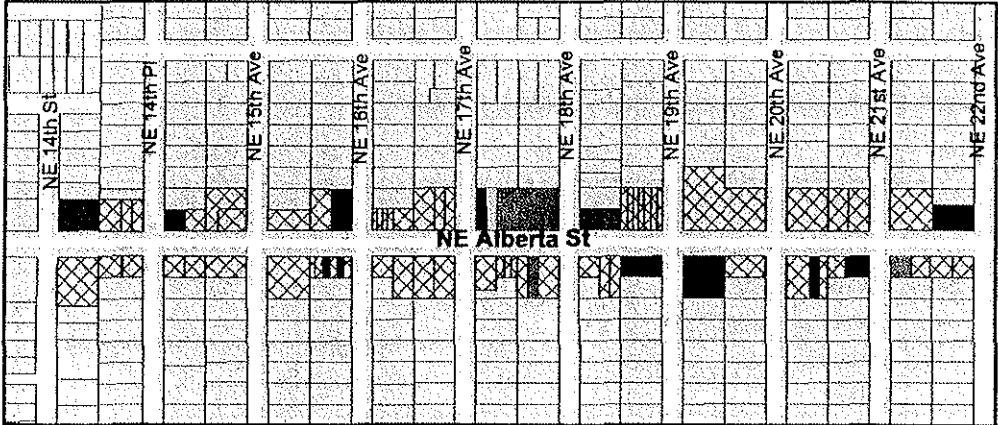
Table 1: Types of businesses in operation during the past 15 years. Includes only those businesses with Alberta Street addresses from NE 14th to NE 31st Ave. General/miscellaneous services includes businesses such as grocery stores, hair salons, and general non-clothing stores.

A Timeline of Change

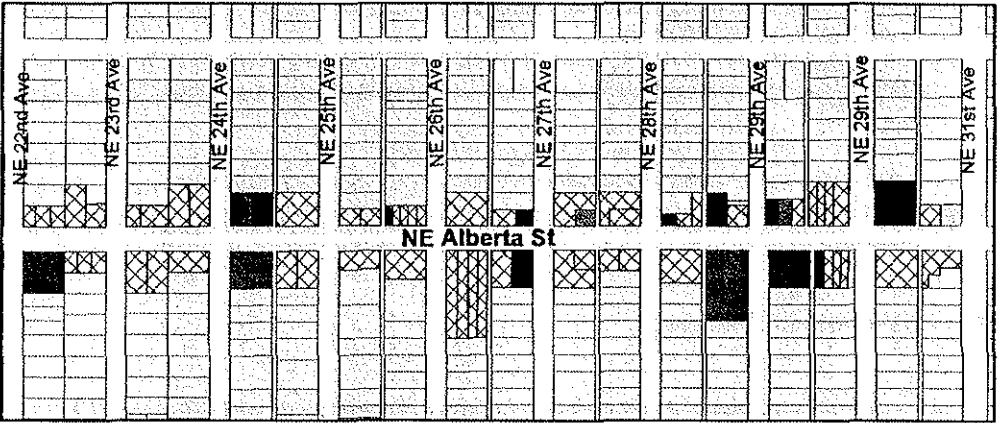
In 1990, many of storefronts along Alberta Street had boarded up windows, although some contend that they were not abandoned. Several property owners along the street claim that the 'vacant' spaces were covers for drug deals and actually witnessed the secretive methods of conducting business within these storefronts (Guardino 2005; Wentland 2005).

The legitimate businesses that were in operation during the early and mid-1990s consisted mainly of light industrial uses. Automobile-related uses predominated the

Land Use & Business Types 1990



NE 14th to NE 22nd



NE 22nd to NE 31st

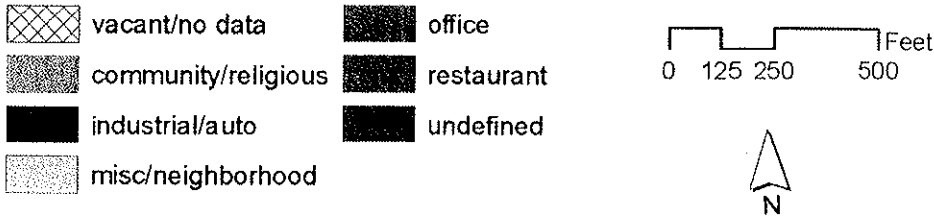
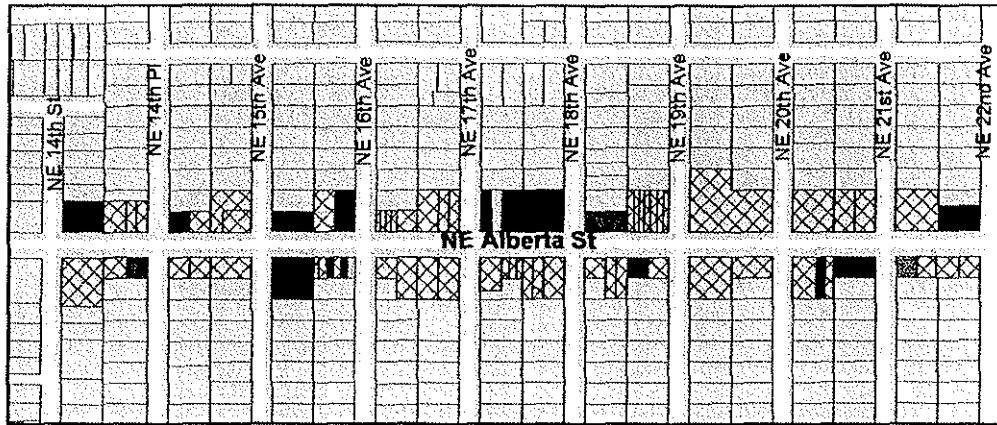
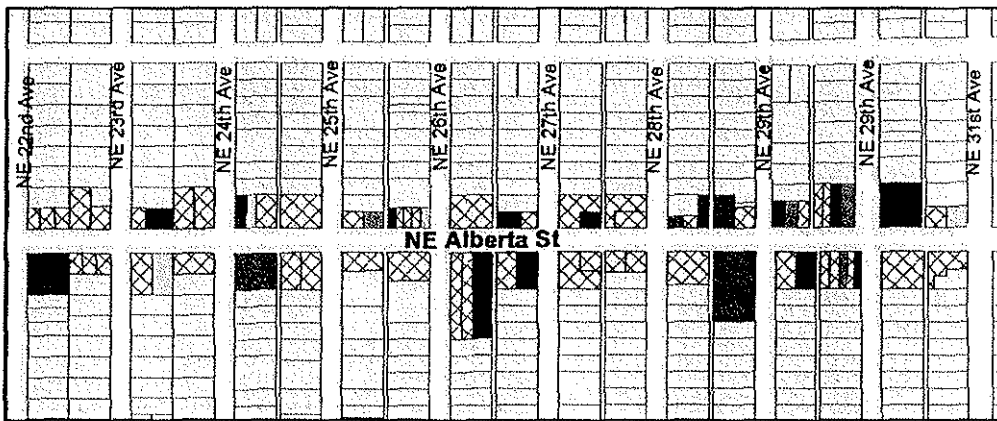


Figure 18: 1990 Commercial land uses from NE 14th to NE 31st Avenues.

Land Use & Business Types 1995



NE 14th to NE 22nd



NE 22nd to NE 31st

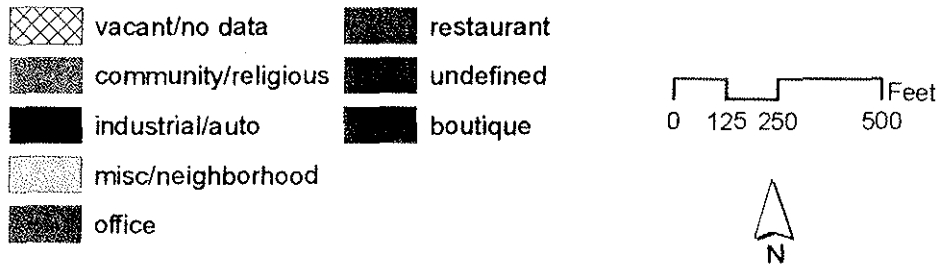
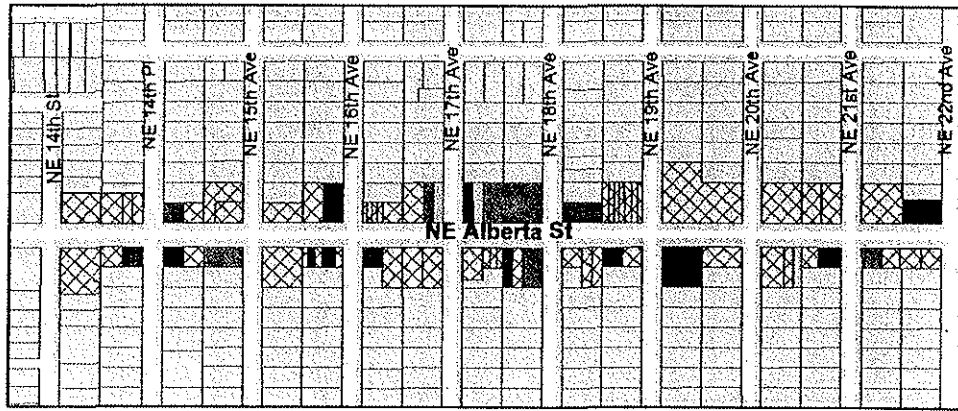
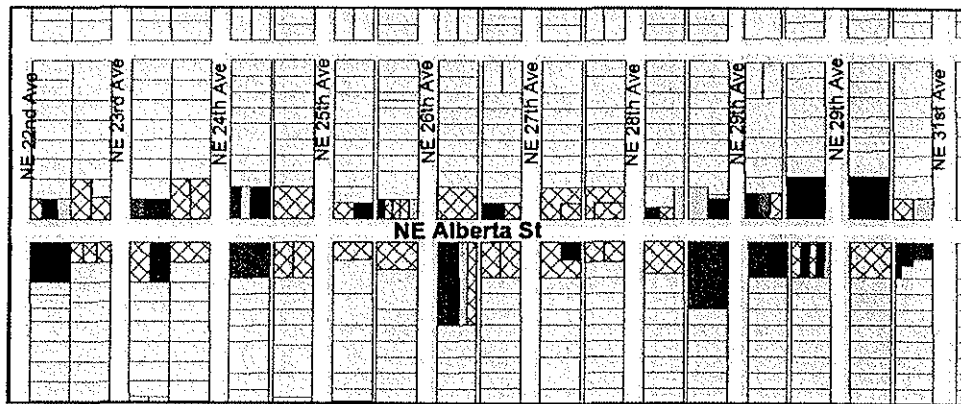


Figure 19: 1995 commercial land uses from NE 14th to NE 31st Avenues

Land Use & Business Types 2000



NE 14th to NE 22nd



NE 22nd to NE 31st

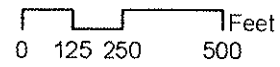
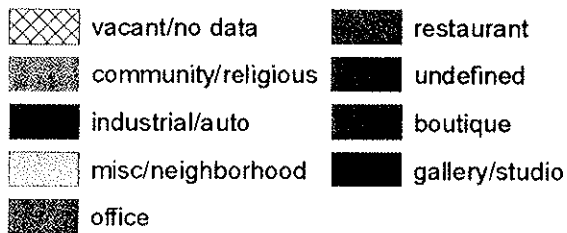
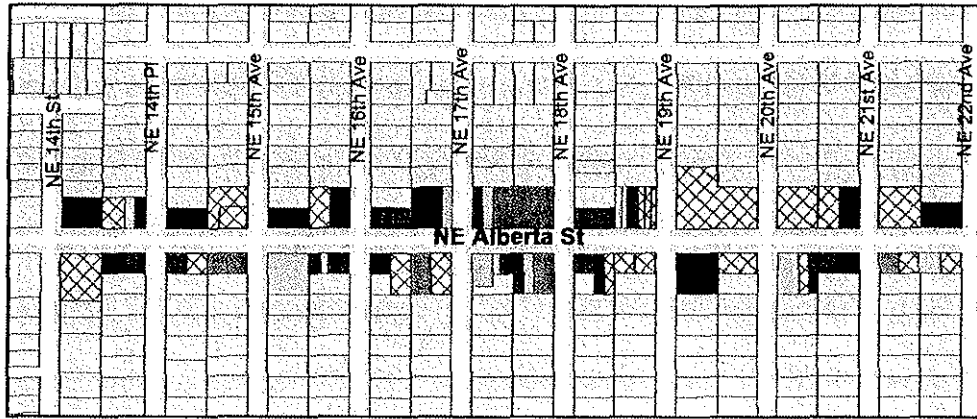
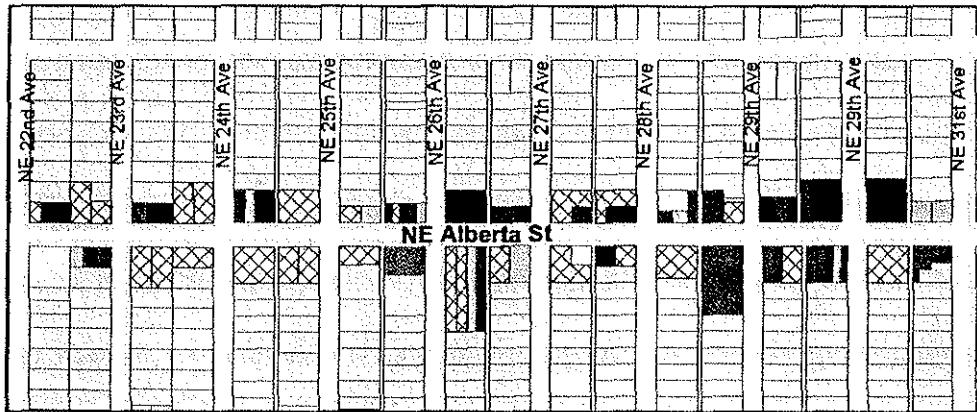


Figure 20: 2000 commercial land uses from NE 14th to NE 31st Avenues

Land Use & Business Types 2005



NE 14th to NE 22nd



NE 22nd to NE 31st

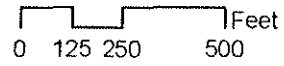
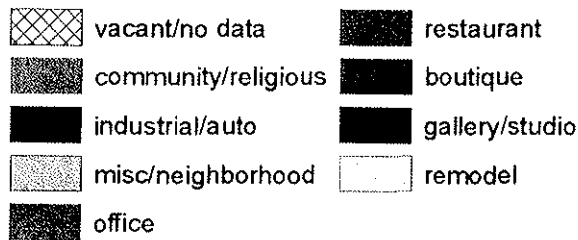


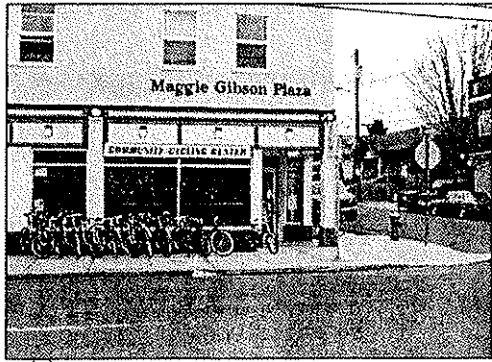
Figure 21: 2005 commercial land uses from NE 14th to NE 31st

landscape – repair, upholstery, and body work. Twenty out of the forty-five businesses (44%) listed in the 1990 Cole Directories were industrial related. Businesses on the street included plumbing services, construction contractors, small neighborhood markets, and beauty salons. Joe’s Place at the corner of NE 18th and Alberta – the only restaurant listed in 1990 – has been operating since the late 1980s and continues to attract a crowd of locals, becoming somewhat of a neighborhood icon and a symbol of the street’s history as a predominantly black community. Rose City Cab Company at NE 16th, Vian’s Automotive at NE 27th, Courtesy Janitorial at NE 17th, Aladdin Finishers at NE 21st, and Paint Specialists at NE 29th all continue to operate and have survived the ongoing process of reinvestment and upgrading along the street.

By 1995, Alberta had entered its nascent stages of revitalization but retained many of the automotive uses that characterized the street in 1990. The street now housed five restaurants; three of them were taquerias, one of them was Joe’s Place. Light industrial land uses still predominated the landscape, although a handful of neighborhood services had opened, including the Community Cycling Center in the Rexall Rose building at NE 24th. By offering bicycle workshops and promoting sustainable community methods of transportation, the CCC meshed well with the burgeoning bohemian crowd moving into the district. It eventually relocated to a larger space in the Maggie Gibson building at NE 17th (Figure 22). The remaining space on the first floor of the Rexall building, which in 1990 housed an auto upholstery shop, had been refurbished to include a coffee shop that adopted the namesake of the storefront’s original use.

A few blocks east, another business established itself as a fixture on the street. La Bonita opened its doors in 1994 (under a different name) on Alberta near NE 29th Avenue, serving cheap burritos and other Mexican dishes to customers who frequented the grocery store that shared the space (Wentland 2005). La Sirenita opened across the alley in 1995 with the help from a Storefront Improvement grant from PDC. In 1999, the owners of La Sirenita leased the vacant space next door and opened a small Hispanic grocery store to complement the burrito shop. A small Mexican enclave of eateries and groceries continues to persist on the street today, in addition to the Bohio Studio at NE 14th Place and the Onda Gallery at NE 22nd Street that both specialize in Latino art work. Interestingly, the demographic data in Chapter 5 indicates a modestly-sized but growing Hispanic population, yet rarely does one encounter Hispanics on the street who is not serving burritos. Figure 22 shows some of the Mexican-oriented businesses along Alberta Street.

A number of new businesses had opened by 2000, many of them contributing to the emerging artist community that had grown since the advent of Last Thursday in 1997. Several spaces that were occupied in 1995 by auto related uses now housed boutiques selling locally made clothing or artwork. Local sculptor Brian Borrello took over a space next to the Rexall Rose building that previously housed a car wash before being vacant. Videorama – whose owner was an integral part of the initiation of Last Thursday – opened in 1997 at the southwest corner of NE 30th and Alberta in a space that used to be an auto repair shop. The Rexall Rose coffee house had changed owners and names, but offered the same use. In a structure that used to be an apartment



(a)



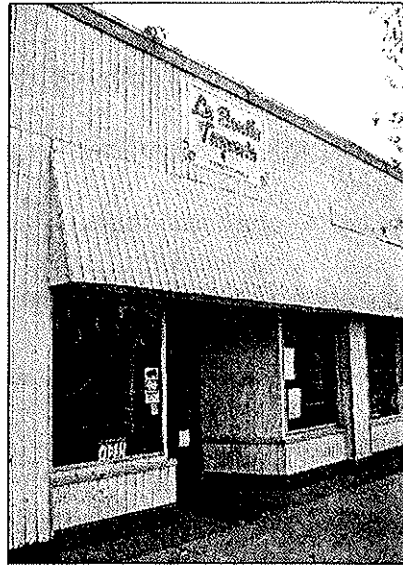
(c)



(d)



(f)



(b)



(e)

Figure 22: (a), Community Cycling Center at NE 17th; Mexican establishments – (b) La Bonita at NE 29th; (c) La Sirentia at NE 28th; (d) Don Pancho grocery at NE 20th; and (e) Onda Gallery at NE 23rd; (f) Guardino Gallery at NE 30th.

building, the Acadia Ballroom took over the upstairs while the first floor was divided into six separate storefronts used for music production and a real estate office.

A handful of restaurants opened along the street. In 1999, Chez What? Café moved into a newly remodeled, once vacant building at NE 22nd (Wentland 2005). The café had previously occupied an old building at NE 29th (where it opened in 1996), which became home to Bernie's Southern Bistro. One could also find eateries serving pizza and Asian cuisine, both of which occupied spaces within the same building that used to house office space and a secondhand store.

By 2000, the Guardino Gallery at NE 30th (Figure 22) had established itself as a strong art contender on the street, a gallery considered “the epicenter of a vital rebirth of culture” (Dresbeck & Johnson 2005). Donna and Sal Guardino bought the building in 1997 with the intention of opening an art gallery. When they found the space, it was vacant and had previously been used as a church. Around the time of their purchase, McMenamín's was completing the renovation of the Kennedy School at NE 33rd and Killingsworth with the intention of opening another one of their brewpubs. Donna Guardino (2005) felt that the redevelopment of the Kennedy signified that the neighborhood was on the verge of revitalization. She had also witnessed the effect of art in changing communities while living in Sonoma County, California; she envisioned a similar path of redevelopment for Alberta Street.

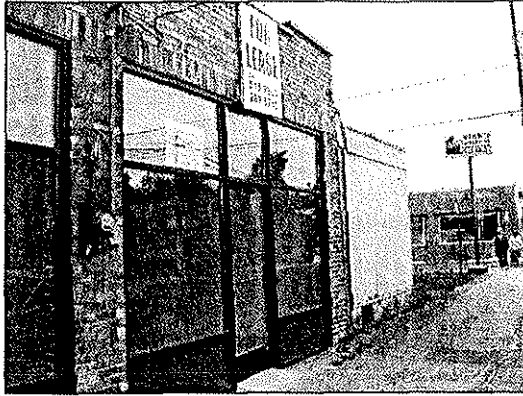
With regards to the Kennedy School, which opened in 1997, McMenamín's does have a tendency to locate in revitalizing urban districts. The Bagdad Theater essentially solidified the gentrification of the Hawthorne district in southeast Portland

(Hardyman 1992). The Bagdad, serves as an icon of preservation in their respective communities, and while the Kennedy School does as well, it also directly contributes to the neighborhood by providing meeting room space, swimming pools for local residents, and a bed and breakfast for visiting guests. Although the Kennedy School is closer to NE Killingsworth Street, its presence in the Concordia neighborhood suggested at an early date the potential of the Alberta district to become a destination community in a once overlooked area of Portland.

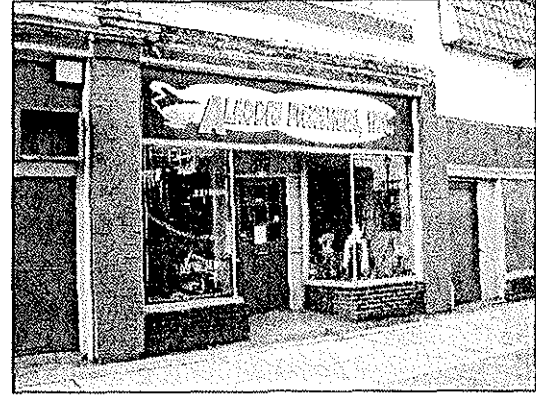
The Current State of Affairs

As of July 2005, there are over two dozen restaurants on Alberta offering cuisine choices such as Mexican, Thai, pizza, and traditional American fare. The Vita Café operates at NE 31st and is a mainstay for vegetarians throughout the city. Bella Faccia Pizzeria occupies a storefront once used as an artist's live/work space as well as a daycare center. Next door to Bella Faccia is Jellyfish, serving a fusion menu of sushi and tapas; Scary Monster Music used to occupy that space before moving to the Rexall Rose building in 2003. Chez What? closed its doors in 2003, much to the dismay of the local community, to be replaced by an Italian eatery named Ciao Vito. Helser's at NE 16th opened in 2004, replacing TJ Bistro. The popular watering hole Bink's will soon celebrate its fourth year anniversary. Another burrito shop opened next to Don Pancho at NE 20th, hoping to follow in the successful footsteps of La Sirenita and La Bonita.

The district maintains a mix of uses that create a well-rounded commercial corridor. Figure 23 shows several photographs that demonstrate the wide variety of



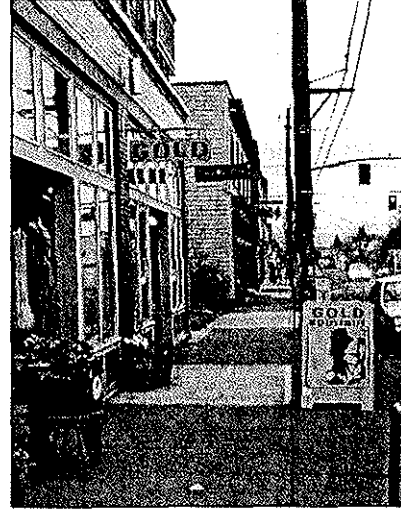
(a)



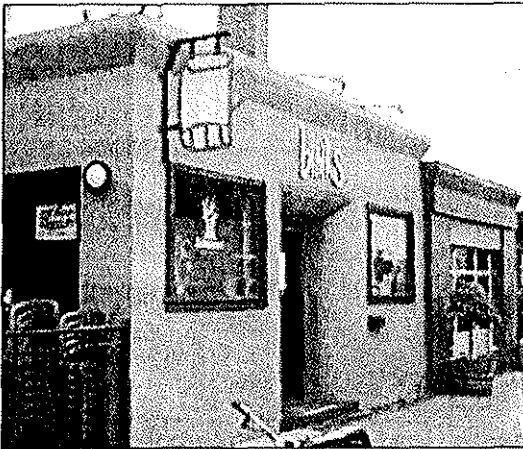
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Figure 23: (a) space for lease with Vian's Automotive next door at NE 27th; (b) Aladdin Finishers, NE 21st; (c) Dominion House of Prayer at NE 25th; (d) 1500 block; (e) Bink's at NE 28th; and (f) Joe's Place at NE 18th

business types available on Alberta. Businesses such as the Alberta Yoga Shala, Tumbleweed dresses, Frock (second hand clothing), and the Co-Op Grocery keep people on the street during non-eating hours. Furthermore, established operations such as Joe's Place, Vian's Automotive, Aladdin Finishers, and the street's many religious organizations provide neighborhood services that evoke images of the past that are quite different from the artsy future portrayed by most newer establishments.

While businesses thrive on the street, vacant lots and buildings persist, as well as several of the older industrial related services. There are currently seventeen vacant lots and storefronts along Alberta Street, and twelve businesses with an industrial history, i.e. Aladdin Finishers, Acme Glass, and Rex Walker Plumbing. Unimproved lots often serve as parking or vendor areas during Last Thursday and the Art Hop (Figure 24a), while vacant, dilapidated buildings double as backdrops for artwork during events. The space that previously housed the Medicine Hat Gallery and the B Complex nightclub at NE 18th has sat vacant for several months; prior to these two businesses, Alberta Fish & Poultry operated there for over thirty years. The mechanic shops continue to operate, providing an interesting contrast to the art galleries, cafés, and boutiques that attract people to the district. Perhaps it is this stark contrast of uses that gives the area its appeal.

A quick walk along the street, though, and one gets the impression that this will not continue much longer. Renovations have been completed and the retail spaces leased in the building at the Northwest corner of NE 26th. A developer has almost completed construction of a new office building at NE 22nd. A neglected structure at

NE 24th was just purchased by the owner of Bella Faccia, where she hopes to lease space to several restaurants. The Mediterranean style building at NE 27th has had workers in it during the day, rehabilitating it for occupancy. Even the building on the southwest corner of NE 28th – one of the oldest structures on the street with a twenty-year vacancy – has had the boards removed from its windows and a “For Rent” sign posted on the door (Figure 24b).

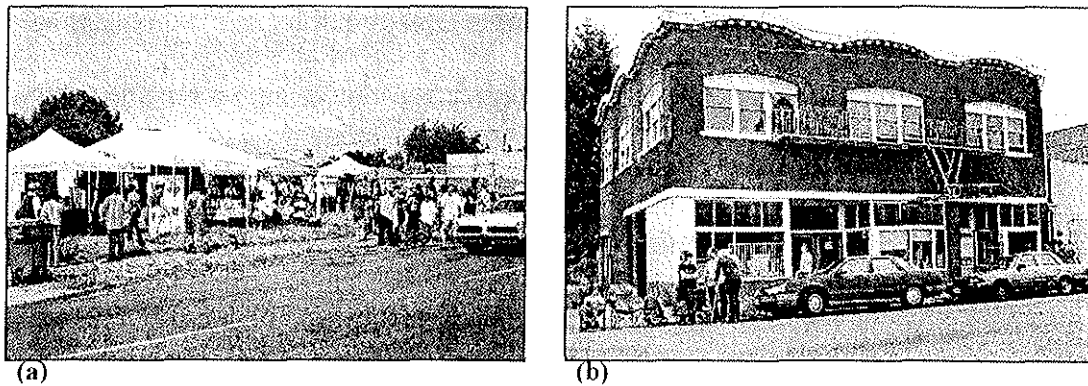


Figure 24: (a) vacant lot at NE 20th; (b) underused building at NE 28th

Art, Cuisine, and Gentrification

Commercial real estate broker Michelle Reeves of Windermere believes that restaurants are the only type of business that can really survive in the district, simply because there is not a strong enough market to support neighborhood retail. Eric Wentland, owner of the building that currently houses Ciao Vito and previous owner of the La Sirenita building, concurs and believes that Alberta will make a name for itself as a restaurant row. Indeed, the mention of Alberta Street conjures images of taquerias, Thai restaurants, coffee shops, and other local eateries; *The Oregonian* featured the Alberta Arts District in 2001 by listing six restaurants to visit while visiting the

neighborhood (Off the Menu 2001). As of July 2005 twenty-five restaurants operated along the street⁵.

This brings up the mere fact that Alberta is known as an ‘arts district,’ and that art is used as an identity for the street, not the restaurants. Perhaps what is implied by the restaurant row theory is simple economics. With the increasing popularity of the Alberta district, real estate entrepreneurs will invest more dollars into the development of the area, resulting in an inflation of prices. Demand for space on the street will also increase, further driving up rates. Landlords can charge higher rents to food establishments because the level of build-out required for such spaces. Thus restaurants may be the only sort of business that can afford the higher lease rates that the district may soon demand. And while there are more restaurants on the street than art galleries (25 and 18 respectively), the fact that most of these restaurants show artwork helps uphold the area’s title as an arts district.

Additionally, many artists within the neighborhood provide a substantial portion of workforce for restaurants along the street. Most front-of-the-house employees are representative of the bohemian character of Alberta, with visible piercings, tattoos, and funky hairstyles. In the Wicker Park neighborhood of Chicago, “the hiring of local bohemian types in front-stage service positions is one way that local entrepreneurs strategize to maintain this [counterculture] marketable image” (Lloyd 2004, 362). Restaurant employment allows for a reasonably steady income with flexibility often needed for creative production. Moreover, service sector jobs typically allow for

⁵ Count includes coffee shops/cafés, bars, and traditional restaurants

greater personal aesthetic expression, a quality lacking in the perceived confinements of the 'corporate' world (ibid.).

Food and restaurants can also be considered their own form of art and contribute to the increasing cultural consumption of gentrifying districts (Zukin 1991). Shifts in the social organization of space often parallel landscape patterns of cuisine in that restaurants become increasingly trendy and reflective of their surrounding population, although one is not necessarily indicative of the other. "[M]embers of a 'new cultural class'...use their taste for, and experience of, exotic food as a means of sustaining their class position" (May 1996, cited in Bridge & Dowling 2001).

Such is the case on Alberta as the trend has been toward restaurants that are typically more expensive and fashionable than what the street has seen in the past. For example, the first eateries on the street served burritos or café-style sandwiches, as in La Bonita or the Rexall Rose Café. While these places became neighborhood classics (Rexall Rose later became the Star E. Rose), they did not necessarily gain attention like the newer establishments of Bernie's Southern Bistro, Ciao Vito, or La Palabra (see Portland Monthly 2005, Dinner 2005, and Pucci 2005, respectively; Figure 25) Furthermore, the existence of gourmet and organic grocery stores, i.e. New Seasons and the Alberta Co-op, cater to a more socially aware middle-class that engenders similar gentrifying effects of sit-down restaurants (Bridge & Dowling 2001).



(a)



(b)

Figure 25: (a) Bernie's Southern Bistro at NE 29th; (b) mural on the side of Ciao Vito at NE 22nd.

The Fight for Local Representation

With all of the changes that have occurred within the past fifteen years, there is a concerted effort by business owners to keep the stores locally-owned and operated. At one point during 2003, a petition was circulated to establishments along Alberta Street to keep franchised corporations out of the area through community awareness and involvement. For the time being, these efforts have proved successful; broker Michelle Reeves claims that Starbucks no longer considers locating on the street as a result of threats from residents in the neighborhood. The majority of businesses along the street are owned by people who live within the Alberta district – at least 30 of the 104 – and at least two of the four new buildings on the street were developed by members of the community.

There is also quite a bit of mention of gentrification. Prior to the repaving of the sidewalk in front of the Alberta Co-op at NE 15th, someone had spray-painted “What

makes you think you are not part of gentrification?” on the pavement. Donna Guardino has seen her windows tagged with comments such as “Yuppies go home.” Her windows have also been broken at least three times since she opened the gallery. Other signs of disgruntled residents include anarchy-related graffiti and ‘traffic signs’ depicting the alleged redlining of Northeast Portland (Figure 26). Five years ago, an anonymous artist posted “Coming Soon” signs in vacant storefront windows for The Gap and Starbucks (Dawdy 2000). Although it was an April Fool’s prank, it spoke to the discontent felt by some of the locals regarding the recent wave of reinvestment and perhaps the influx of an increasingly white population.



Figure 26: Neighborhood activists express their discontent with recent changes in the community with graffiti and imitation street signs.

The mix of businesses on the street maintains and emphasizes the diversity of the community. While many of the new shops are directed toward the more affluent incoming residents, businesses such as Earl’s Barbershop at NE 17th, Hattie’s clothing

at NE 23rd, and the Black United Fund of Oregon at NE 28th cater to the African-American population. Moreover, many of the churches within the neighborhood have a multi-ethnic congregation that can be seen when visiting the street on any Sunday morning.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (1997) provides a comprehensive definition of gentrification: “the process of renewal accompanying the influx of middle-class people into deteriorating areas that often displaces earlier usually poorer residents.” Zukin (1987) defines it more precisely as “the conversion of socially marginal and working-class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use” (129). She goes on to claim that it is also the result of “the clustering of new cultural amenities,” which is certainly the case along Alberta Street.

Gentrification, either residential or commercial, is inherently rooted in displacement. However on Alberta Street, few businesses were actually displaced when revitalization began. As noted previously, several of the businesses that existed in 1990 continue to operate today. And while some have closed and been replaced with services quite dissimilar to their predecessors, the process hardly constitutes gentrification when most of the stores that conducted business on the street fifteen years ago did little to contribute to a vibrant, safe urban community.

The new of businesses along Alberta Street point to a shift in shopping preferences by offering more high-end goods and services for the residents of the community. Yet in many cases these new services did not displace a business, rather they took over an unoccupied space. The boutique Ella’a at NE 26th and Alberta

provides a perfect example of this phenomenon. The shop opened on the Last Thursday of June in a newly remodeled space that been vacant for several years. The owner clearly caters to the new, more affluent population of the district, offering blouses and dresses that sell for over \$200.

Throughout the past fifteen years of revitalization, there has been a significant shift from businesses with a local focus to those that attract a more regional population. Businesses that once served only the immediate neighborhood -- mainly auto-related services -- have been complimented or replaced by operations that draw from all over the city, such as the Community Cycling Center, Vita Café, and the Guardino Gallery. While most of the new businesses on Alberta are locally owned, they have established a presence that is known city-wide.

Tour guides for Portland attest to this phenomenon by listing the Alberta Arts District as a place to patronize while visiting the city. *Best Places Portland* (Gottberg 2004) touts Alberta as a “diamond in the rough” with a “lively, groovy, youthful scene” and the *Insider’s Guide to Portland* (Dresbeck & Johnson 2005) lists the Alberta Streetfair and Last Thursday as events worthy of recognition. An area that was once completely off the radar in respect to tourism has now gained popularity and respect as an inviting alternative to the shopping districts along Hawthorne and NW 23rd. Alberta may not receive quite as much attention as these two districts, but its mere mention in tour guides shows the shift of focus from local services to regional attractions.

The Alberta district has received ample media attention as well, both in Portland publications and several from other cities. *The Oregonian* featured numerous articles in

the late 1990s about the resurgence of Alberta into a neighborhood filled with vibrant art galleries and tasty eateries (Hill 1999; Fitzgibbon 1997, 1999, 2003a). *The Business Journal Portland* has highlighted the Alberta district as an enclave ripe for small businesses and as a minority-friendly business environment (Neill 1999; Robertson 2002). *The Detroit News* describes the Alberta district as one of revitalization and gentrification (Trowbridge 2002). *The Seattle Times* recently showcased Alberta Street in their travel section, highlighting the myriad of businesses that have opened within the past year (Pucci 2005). A common thread throughout most of these articles is the mention of Alberta's dark past, one that is being overshadowed by its bright future as a thriving art community (see also Dawdy 2000).

An excellent example of the regional attractiveness of the Alberta district lies in the opening of New Seasons market in 2001 at NE 33rd and Killingsworth. It moved into a building that once housed another grocery store but had been vacant for five years. As the fourth store in the locally owned chain, the Concordia location solidified the Alberta neighborhood as one with a promising – and profitable – future. Like McMenamain's brewpubs, New Seasons has a pattern of locating in once marginal areas on the verge of revitalization. It recently opened a store in 2004 at SE 20th and Division to a wealth of opposition claiming that it would drive out smaller operations such as the People's Co-operative grocery located seven blocks away (Goldfield 2003). Similar reactions have occurred as the franchise plans another location at North Interstate and Portland Boulevard.

This is not to say that Alberta has completely realized its potential as a revitalized district. For now, it is simply in its revitalization stage with a large percentage of buildings having been remodeled. Hardyman (1992) claims that revitalization becomes gentrification once all vacant storefronts have been filled and each building has been upgraded. Alberta has yet to reach that point, although it is most likely on its way. The cultural attractiveness embedded in the galleries, restaurants, boutiques, and public art along the street will continue to lure middle-class residents and potentially real estate speculators, at which point the housing prices and commercial rents demanded by the district will create a barrier to entry by less affluent members of society.

Chapter 5 – Housing and Residential Change

An important aspect of Alberta's redevelopment is the swelling cost of housing, the upfiltering of the housing stock, and the change in demographic composition. Numerous interviewees claim that they would not be able to afford to buy their homes if they were looking to purchase today, an indicator of rising property values and property taxes. This chapter provides a brief look at the residential change that has occurred as an indirect result of the Target Area Designation. The TAD committee, along with members of community and Sabin CDC, felt that if the commercial corridor along Alberta Street could be revived, then the housing stock would follow suit. I will describe the real estate and demographics of Alberta and how these two issues lend additional evidence to the change of the neighborhood. All data comes from the U.S. Decennial Census in 1990 and 2000 unless otherwise noted.

The Housing Stock

Residential real estate within the study area varies quite drastically in terms of quality, value, and household composition, though broad generalizations can be made. The majority of homes within the study area were built in the earlier part of the twentieth century, with a median year of construction in 1913. Some date back to the late 1800s, while others were erected just last year. Homes are typically bungalow style with one to one-and-a-half stories on 5,000 square foot lots (Figure 27).

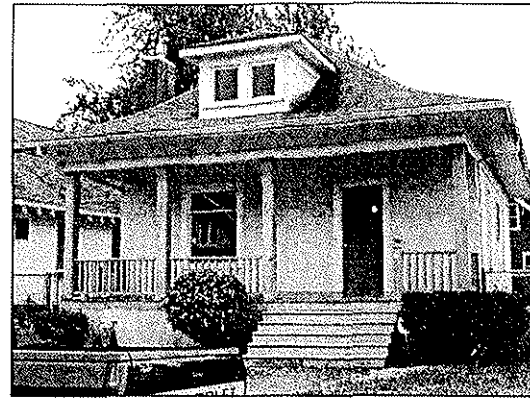


Figure 27: (a-b) examples of the housing stock with the Alberta district; (c) unpaved portion of NE Emerson between 28th and 29th.

Number of units within structure	Block Group 31.01	Block Group 31.02	Block Group 32.01	Block Group 32.02	Total
1 – detached	371	419	300	355	1,445
1 – attached	21	5	0	5	31
2	102	22	43	28	195
3-4	46	56	15	38	155
5-9	17	18	26	0	61
10-19	56	0	8	0	64
TOTAL	613	527	420	426	1,986

Table 2: Number of housing units within four-block-group study area. Numbers based on total number of housing units. Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Single-family detached homes comprise nearly three-fourths of the 2,000 housing units within the four census block groups. Housing in block groups 31.02 and 32.02 are 80% and 83% single-family homes, respectively (Table 2). This is not surprising since these two block groups are south of Alberta Street, adjacent to the affluent Alameda neighborhood and closer to premier addresses in Irvington (Figure 1, page 3).

Conversely, block group 31.01 is comprised of 60% single-family homes. It has the highest concentration of duplexes and other multi-family units, with a disproportionately large amount of larger structures with 10-19 units (9% compared to under 2% for the other three). Zoning within this block group contributes to this phenomenon, as it has more multi-family zones than all other block groups within the study area. Table 2 shows the composition of structures within each block group.

While much of the housing within the study area has been rehabilitated, some homes remain in poor condition with peeling paint and weedy, overgrown yards. Furthermore, several streets such as portions of NE Emerson and NE Wygant, lack pavement, and many are plagued with potholes and a rough concrete finish (Figure 27). The unfinished appearance of the streets and relatively decrepit housing stands in stark contrast to the freshly painted bungalows and colorful gardens of the recently refurbished homes throughout the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Demographics

Housing tenure

As of the 2000 U.S. Census, the study area contained 1,986 housing units, 1,873 of which were occupied. At 94%, occupancy has increased by nearly 200 units since the 1990 census when the rate was at 88%. While the total number of housing units decreased from 1990 to 2000, owner occupancy increased by 23% to where over half of the housing units are owner occupied. Rental occupancy fell by 11% and is expected to experience an additional decline of 7% by 2008 (Pacific NW Title 2004). Table 3 outlines housing status, while figure 28 graphically displays occupancy numbers from the 1990 and 2000 census.

Housing value

The rising demand for homes within the study area has caused an increase in housing costs. Indeed, the average sale price of homes in the Alberta district have experienced an increase. While prices in the city as a whole have risen steadily, prices in Alberta remain lower than the city average but have experienced a more dramatic increase.

Figure 29 shows that Alberta and Portland have experienced similar patterns of rising housing sales prices. The gap between the two areas in 1990 was quite significant; sale prices in Portland were over \$75,000 higher than those in the Alberta district. By 2003, the gap had narrowed to a \$40,000 difference. Moreover, Alberta experienced an increase in average sale price of \$30,525 in 1990 to \$179,287 in 2003 –

	1990	2000
Total housing units	2,036	1,986
Occupied units	1,785 (87.7%)	1,873 (94.3%)
Owner occupied	831 (46.6%)	1,025 (54.7%)
Renter occupied	954 (53.4%)	848 (45.3%)
Vacant	251	113

Table 3: Housing occupancy and tenure status within the Alberta district.

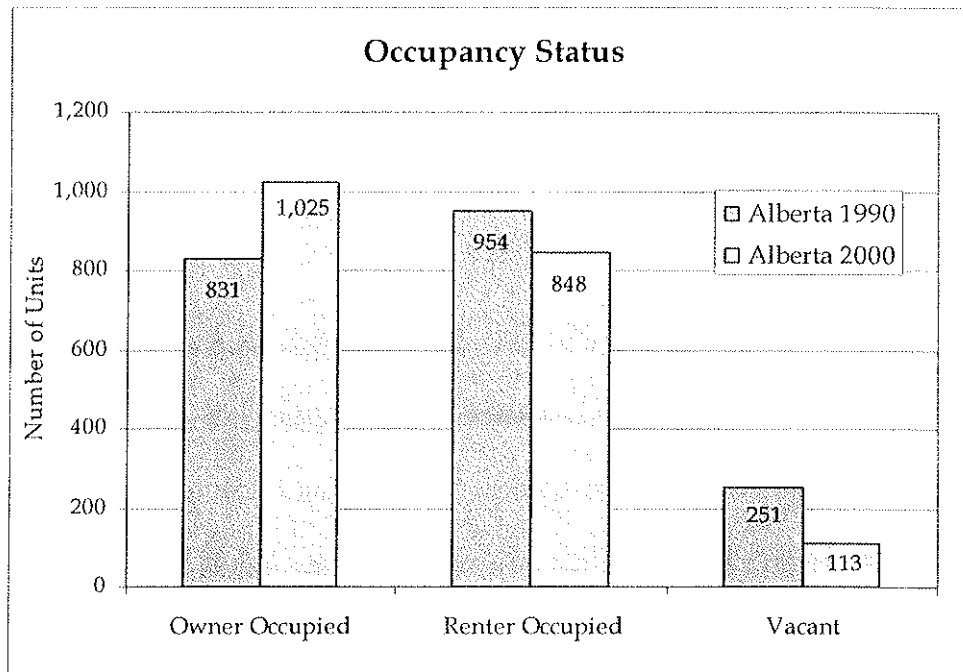


Figure 28: Occupancy status within study area, based on total number of housing units.

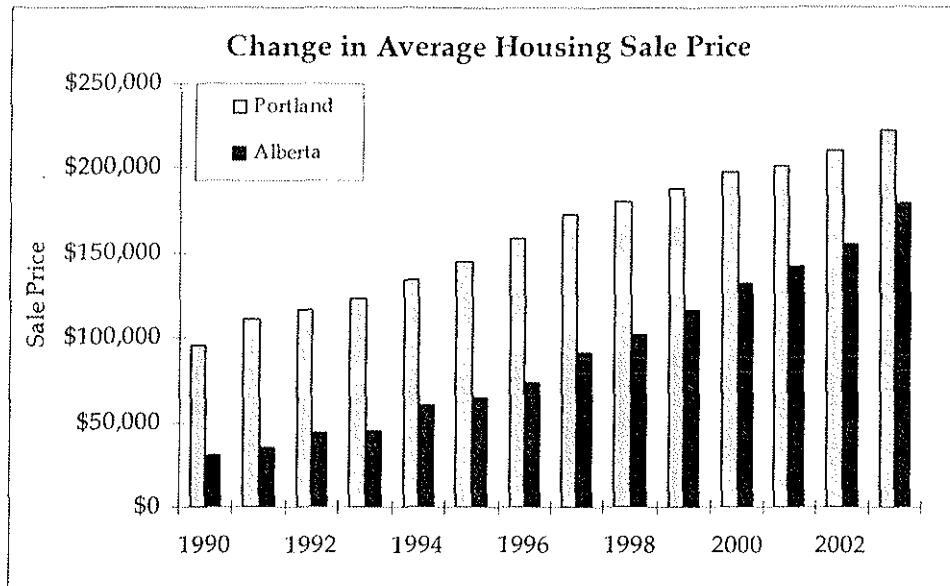


Figure 29: Average housing sale price 1990-2003 within study area. Source: RLIS, May 2004; Higgins 2004.

an astounding 487% change; the per cent change in Portland was a significantly lower rate of 132% from \$96,000 to \$222,500 (U.S. Census 1990, 2000; Higgins 2004).

General demographic data

There is a range of household sizes throughout the study area. Block group 31.01 has the highest number of households, which corresponds to its high number of overall housing units. Households with four or more people nearly match the number of one-person households, 161 and 174 respectively. This block group also had the highest concentration of multi-family structures. The fact that there are so many larger households within the block group seems counterintuitive, although the high number of one-person households runs in line with multi-unit dwellings assuming that they tend to be smaller units. Two-person households comprise the largest portion of households within all block groups at about 35%. This is not surprising considering the increasing

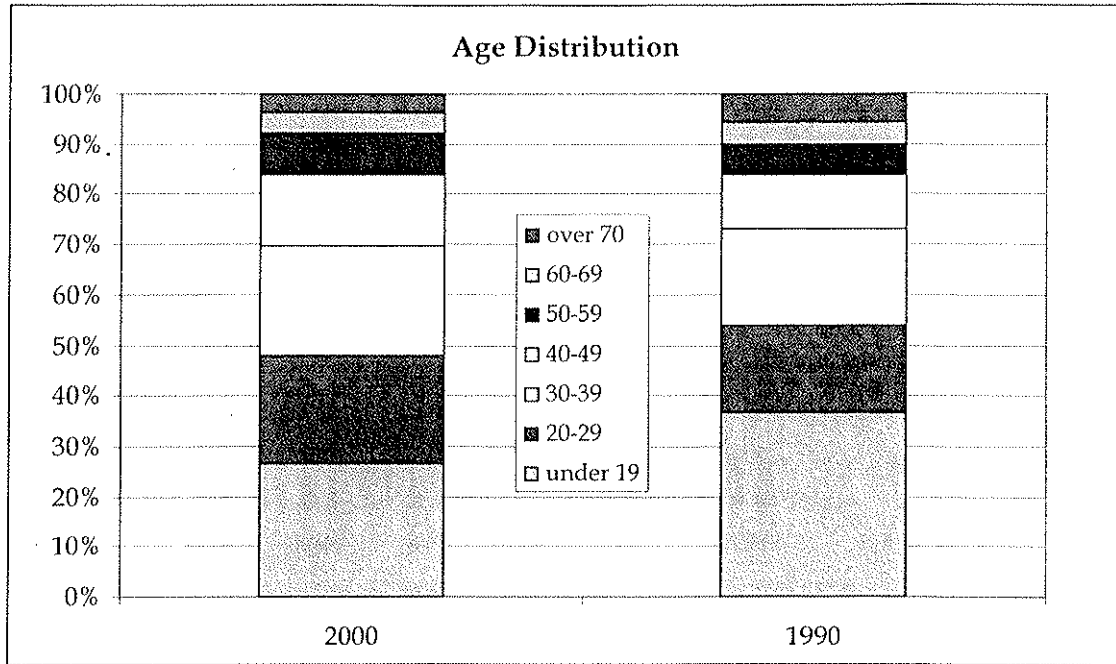


Figure 30: Age distribution for the Alberta area in 2000 and 1990, based on total population of the four block groups.

number of young couples that moved into the neighborhood around the turn of the century.

One of the most notable changes within the neighborhood is the perceived increase in the number of children. Several property owners recall when the only people who used to walk along the streets were gang members and prostitutes, and how over time, baby strollers started to outnumber the derelicts that hung out on the street. Interestingly, the percentage of children under age 5 actually decreased from 1990 to 2000, as did the overall number of children under 19 (Figure 30). The number of people aged 20 to 50 increased, indicating the swelling popularity of the district among young, single urban types. In 2003, the age bracket from 25 to 34 comprised 21% of the district's population, compared to 18% in 1990. Additionally, the percentage of

people never married increased from 35% to 40% in 1990 and 2000, respectively (Pacific NW Title 2004).

Other demographic factors also experienced an increase. Median income went up since the 1990 census – a 93% increase over ten years from under \$20,000 to nearly \$40,000. More tellingly, the average per capita income in all four block groups more than doubled from \$8,000 to nearly \$17,000. As shown in Figure 2, the white population gained numbers as the African-American population decreased. Hispanics moved into the community as well, increasing their presence from 203 to 354 – 4.2% to 7.4% of the total population – in 1990 and 2000, respectively.

The Changing Landscape

While the demographic and housing change is significant to the overall change in the community, it is not so much the actual numbers that matter as the character and physical attributes reflect the statistical data. The fact that homes within the area can sell for over \$300,000 emphasizes the desirability of the Alberta neighborhood; or it could indicate speculation of future value and the promise of a redeveloped urban community that has yet to realize its full potential. The overall increase in sales price combined with the percentage change from 1990 to 2003 lends credence to the notion that demand for housing within the district has increased. Certainly the increase in sale price could be attributed to an improvement in the quality of the housing stock, but a closer examination of housing quality and improvements would be necessary to fully address this issue. Regardless of why housing prices have increased – be it housing

quality, desirability, speculation, or simple inflation -- the demand clearly exists for owner-occupied housing within the district.

The presence of art in the study area cannot be ignored when discussing housing value and sale price. While there is not a strong correlation between housing sale prices and distance to the street, the cultural amenities offered within the study area have had a positive impact on property values when viewed in terms of average prices, median values, and percentage increases (see Appendix 2). The direct marketing of the “Alberta Arts District” by realtors and the Art on Alberta organization has most likely had a hand in the surge of prices and property values.

It has been discussed that artistic enclaves facilitate redevelopment and attract middle-class dwellers to neighborhoods once considered marginal (Caulfield 1994; Ley 1996, 2003; Lloyd 2002). Furthermore, “the amenity offered by a concentrated arts presence to middle-class and upper-class arts consumers makes it possible to charge high prices for the housing that is eventually built nearby” (Zukin 1982, 111). In Alberta, the increase in sales prices over the past fifteen years of older, existing homes adds to this theory. Some homes close to the Alameda neighborhood have sold for over \$300 per square foot (the average is just over \$100, see Appendix 2).

Naturally this brings up issues of displacement and gentrification, although no formal study has been conducted to indicate whether or not residents move against their will. However, a professor at Portland State University conducted a survey of residents in the Alberta neighborhood to evaluate their feelings regarding the revitalization (Sullivan 2004). He found that over half of the residents felt that affordable housing

was utmost problem facing the community and that at least one quarter of the respondents were concerned about being able to continue affording their current living situation, regardless of race. The demographic structure has indeed changed to include a more affluent and white population and demand for housing has resulted in an increase in housing prices. The housing stock has also been upgraded and refurbished to reflect the social status new 'gentry,' yet the reality of displacement has yet to be determined.

Chapter 6 – Concluding Remarks

In a city composed of strong neighborhood identities, many communities in Portland strive to make a name for themselves, seeking to highlight their distinctiveness and attract consumers to their respective shopping districts. While formal neighborhood designations provide structure for neighborhood associations and bureaucratic supervision, it is common for neighborhoods to assume vernacular – often ambiguous – boundaries defined by those who live within them (Bain 2003). Alberta, once known for its crime-ridden reputation, has revalorized itself to become a respected art community that attracts visitors to its many galleries and restaurants.

The opening of a handful of galleries in the late 1990s – for example, the Guardino Gallery, Brian Borrello Design, and Onda Gallery in 1997, 1998, and 1999 respectively – planted the seeds for what would establish Alberta’s identity as an arts district. The concentration of a

particular mix of shops in a local area can reinforce a distinct geographical retail identity that then attracts further similar forms of investment. Such microgeographies of retailing also create distinct locales with which individual consumers can identify and in some senses development their sense of identity (Bridge & Dowling 2003, 95).

In the case of Alberta, the “microgeography” of art galleries and studios became the focal point of the neighborhood around which neighborhood celebrations could be centered, further emphasizing the artistic significance of the district.

A Comparative Analysis

Similarities are often drawn by residents between Alberta and other revitalized neighborhoods of Portland, specifically Hawthorne and NW 23rd. This could simply be because these two districts are the most well-known shopping districts, but there are commonalities that deserve attention. Statements are usually directed toward the unwanted mainstream businesses – mainly Starbucks – characteristic of NW 23rd and Hawthorne. Most residents of the Alberta community have a strong desire to keep the businesses locally owned and franchise-free, as shown by a petition posted near Scary Monster Music in the Rexall building (Figure 31).

Hawthorne

SE Hawthorne Boulevard stretches from the end of the Hawthorne Bridge on the west to Mt. Tabor on the east, although its core lies between 28th and 39th Avenues (Hardyman 1992). The retail district is filled with small cafés, second-hand clothing stores, a few upscale boutiques, record shops, gift stores, and coffee houses. Hawthorne has for the most part maintained its bohemian quality that characterized its gentrification in the early 1990s, although Starbucks, Ben & Jerry's ice cream, and Hollywood Video have established their presence. Because of this increasing corporate presence, Hawthorne is often used as an example of what Alberta does not want to become.

Other differences exist between the two streets. For one, Hawthorne is a four-lane arterial with heavy traffic and a frequently used bus traveling along its path. The high volume of traffic can be uninviting to pedestrians, making it difficult to cross the

The Alberta Street Resolution

We as the property owners, business owners, homeowners, tenants, participants in and supporters of the Alberta community/concept have chosen to craft and publicly state our position regarding the focus of the Alberta business district.

We unequivocally support all independent and local businesses and are equally opposed to all franchise, chain and cookie-cutter stores that dominate the shopping districts all over our city.

We use as examples of what we reject: the ubiquitous Starbucks-on-every-corner-coffee-concept and the pervasive sameness of the Gaps and Targets. Instead we opt to support the vigorous, innovative forces of local artists, craftspeople and service providers.

We seek to keep our neighborhood a vibrant and welcoming district for creative inspiration while also encompassing the longstanding businesses and homeowners. Rather than fall into the trap of gentrification we are choosing to keep and maintain our cultural integrity, intensity, diversity and edge.

We are collecting signatures to support this resolution which will be published in local papers and other venues throughout the Portland/Metro area. Please show your support by including your name on this document. Many local merchants have copies to sign and distribute.

**Copies of this resolution available at:
Star E. Rose, 2403 NE Alberta Street**

Figure 31: "The Alberta Street Resolution" posted on the Rexall Building at NE 24th.

street and substantially increasing the decibel level. Conversely, Alberta Street is one lane in either direction and although it is also served by a bus route, its service is not nearly as frequent. While the core retail district is more stretched out than that of Hawthorne, one gets the sense that Alberta is a tighter business community, perhaps because of the independent nature of the stores that line the street.

The increasing trendiness of Hawthorne resulted in the out-migration of many of the residents who helped to shape the image of the district. Interestingly, many of those refugees – some of the gay and lesbian crowd – sought comfort in the funky Alberta neighborhood that had yet to be tarnished by high levels of redevelopment (Abbott 2001). The trend continues today with many of the residents of Alberta preferring it over Hawthorne because of the relatively higher cost of living in the Southeast and the ‘authenticity’ of the Alberta district.

NW 23rd Avenue

The street in Northwest Portland often referred to “Trendy-Third” in tour guides is probably the antithesis of the Alberta district. It warrants a comparison because NW 23rd once had characteristics similar to those currently on Alberta. The Nob Hill neighborhood (of which NW 23rd is a part) has a history similar to Alberta. However, Nob Hill started out as a community housing the aristocracy of Portland rather than working class and immigrant families characteristic of Alberta. Large Victorian homes sat on expansive lots owned by elite doctors and lawyers. While the neighborhood never experienced quite the disinvestment of Alberta, it did fall into decline during the 1940s to be revitalized in the 1970s (Abbott 1983). Today, Nob Hill has some of the

most expensive real estate in the city and the retail corridor along NW 23rd is widely known for its expensive boutiques and high-end restaurants.

While Alberta Street and its surrounding residential neighborhood do not match the affluent quality of NW 23rd and Nob Hill, there are concerns that Alberta could evolve into a similarly trendy district. Once again however, the independent nature of the businesses along Alberta Street plays a significant role in setting it apart from NW 23rd. Many of the businesses are franchise stores – some of which cannot be found anywhere else in Portland, such as Restoration Hardware and Urban Outfitters – and cater to a wealthier population. Art galleries that exist on the street tend to sell expensive pieces that exemplify Lippard’s (1997) description of “culture with a capital C”, high art that also demonstrates a distinction of cultural consumption as described by Zukin (1982, 1991).

Commonalities with other Portland neighborhoods

The Mississippi neighborhood in North Portland presents another example how art and culture can stimulate economic revitalization and establish neighborhood identity, following the successful footsteps of Alberta. The Mississippi Historic District lies about one mile to the southwest of the study area, its main intersection being N. Mississippi Avenue and N. Shaver Street (shown in the lower left corner of Figure 1). It began its revitalization in 1997 with a Target Area Project, and its redevelopment was fueled even further by its inclusion in the Interstate Avenue Corridor Urban Renewal Area which made many of the properties within the district eligible for improvement grants (Stout 2002, 2004).

Drawing on the popularity of First and Last Thursday, Mississippi has initiated its own cultural event with a focus on live music on the second Thursday of each month. Venues such as the Mississippi Studios, Mississippi Pizza, and Bold Sky Café draw music fans with live performances worthy enough to establish Mississippi as a “Mecca for music fans” (Peters 2005). The event is relatively new, and time will tell whether or not the distinction will resonate with customers.

Other neighborhoods have attempted to capitalize on the beneficial aspects of an art community. St. John’s in far North Portland has had some success in celebrating community pride through art exhibitions and artists have moved to the area with the hopes of reviving the historic commercial center (Fitzgibbon 2003b). The Brooklyn neighborhood in Southeast Portland has held at least two annual art walks with the intent to “jump-start with art,” “[t]aking its lead from flourishing Pearl District...and fledgling Alberta District” (Nkrumah 1998).

Additional similarities can be drawn with other revitalizing districts of Portland, such as Belmont, Clinton, and Division (all located in Southeast), yet these areas do not possess a cultural presence as strongly Alberta or Mississippi. Nor do they come up in conversation as potential examples of Alberta’s future, as do Hawthorne and NW 23rd.

Nonetheless, they are examples of different aspects of neighborhood revitalization. Belmont witnessed a surge of reinvestment with the conversion of the Belmont Dairy building at SE 33rd and Belmont into a mixed-use building with the high-end grocery store Zupan’s as its ground floor anchor tenant following the implementation of a Target Area Designation Program similar to Alberta’s (Cutler

2005). It is now surrounded by popular hipster hangouts such as the Aalto Lounge and Stumptown Coffee. Field observation indicates that Clinton Street has become a small enclave of bohemian culture, anchored by the Clinton Street Theater at SE 25th and supported by neighborhood hangouts such as Dot's, the Nightlight Café and a recently opened brewery. Residents of multiple neighborhoods have come together to initiate public agency involvement in the upgrading of Division Street with a focus on sustainable development, a phrase coined as "Green Street meets Main Street" (Anderson 2004).

If the Alberta district can maintain the local ownership of its businesses, it is unlikely that it will progress into the realm of gentrification that characterizes NW 23rd and to a lesser extent, Hawthorne. A lot of the goods sold on Alberta Street are produced by members of the community, such as the clothing at Donna & Toots and the paper lanterns at Hi-Ih. The ambiance created by these independent retailers "can reinforce a distinct geographical retail identity that then attracts further similar forms of investment" (Bridge & Dowling 2001). Furthermore, this distinct identity attracts the locally-minded consumer, which in Portland makes up a substantial and influential cohort of the shopping community.

The Significance of Creativity

Artists and the younger population are attracted to Portland for its high quality of life, class diversity, and tolerance for alternative lifestyles; indeed, Portland has "proportionately more young adults than most large metro areas in the nation," who are

attracted to the city for high quality of life and growing concentration of artists (Portland's Creative Class 2005). The popularity of both First and Last Thursday attest to the high concentration of creativity in the city, at least in respect to handcrafted pieces. Additionally, the funky arts scene, natural beauty, progressive political awareness, and the variety of nighttime entertainment made Portland an appealing option to other more expensive West Coast cities such as Seattle and San Francisco (Abbott 2001). These qualities make up a substantial part of economist Richard Florida's theory of the creative class, and the Alberta example presents evidence of these characteristics.

The importance of open, diverse, and accepting communities cannot be underestimated in regards to attracting members of Florida's creative class. These are some of the main qualities mentioned during interviews regarding the attractiveness of the Alberta Arts District. While Florida (2002c) contends that all "3T's" – technology, talent, and tolerance – are critical to a city's success as a creative center, what Alberta lacks in technology is made up for in talent and tolerance. The presence of a "stylishly disheveled" hipster population that pervades the Alberta district with its tattoos, piercings, and vintage clothing gives the community a diversity not found in many other parts of Portland. When this is mixed with the professional middle-class homebuyer, the result is a sundry mix of bohemian lifestyle for which Alberta has become known. Furthermore, the theory of the "3T's" becomes negligible in its relevance and applicability when it is employed at the neighborhood scale. While perhaps the creative class thesis is not meant to apply at a small scale, it is hard to ignore when even Florida

himself recognizes the “growing concern that high-technology firms and industries are displacing bohemian enclaves” (Florida 2002a, 58).

The Alberta district illuminates how the creative class theory can be applied to a neighborhood scale. While the grassroots artist community that exists in the neighborhood lacks the technology base that Florida claims is critical to economic success, the district thrives because of its self-made identity as an enclave of hipsters, bohemians, and middle-class urbanites. The art community plays a significant role in the livelihood of Alberta as well as the Portland economy as a whole, perhaps contributing to Portland’s overall rank of 18 on Florida’s creativity index (Florida 2002c).

The revitalization of the Alberta neighborhood has received attention from newspapers as far as Detroit (Trowbridge 2002) and as close as Seattle (Pucci 2005). The new café La Palabra at NE 29th was recently featured in *Bon Appetit* magazine (ibid.), and chef Vito Dilullo of Ciao Vito at NE 22nd was recognized in the online restaurant guide “Plate & Pitchfork” (Plate & Pitchfork 2005). Artists, whether creating sculptures, paintings, photographs, clothing, or food, add to the economy by attracting people to Portland for the arts scene and where applicable, by exporting their goods and services out of the region thereby establishing a strong artistic dividend – “the aggregate economic impact that would not occur without the presence of artists” (Markusen and King 2003, 4).

Summary

There is no question that redevelopment efforts change the character of any given neighborhood. However whether this should be of concern in the Alberta district remains a contested issue. Sullivan's (2004) survey of neighborhood residents indicated that the majority feels that the neighborhood has improved over the last five years and 80% feel that it will only get better. Interestingly, white, college-educated homeowners tend to have higher perceptions of the neighborhood and there was no distinction in evaluation based on the length of residence.

As outlined in previous chapters, artists have played a significant role in the revitalization process. They directly changed the nature of the Alberta district by in fact creating that very district. At the time of their influx in the mid-1990s, they did not necessarily contribute to the displacement of any residents. That process however can be classified as gentrification, albeit in a less conventional sense, as the artists' level of cultural capital – as opposed to high levels of economic capital that epitomizes traditional gentrification – exceeded that of the previous residents' (Ley 2003). Furthermore, this richness in cultural capital and acceptance by middle-class society perpetuated the influx of additional members of the middle-class who often held more conventional jobs with higher levels of income, thereby changing the character of the neighborhood even further.

The presence of art clearly sets Alberta apart from other districts within Portland. The community possesses a unique, "less generic" identity and atmosphere that attracts people both to live and to visit, due in large part to the funky vibe provided

by the artwork on display in local businesses and in public spaces. The role of art and creativity in the redevelopment process worked in tandem with the neighborhood vision of public agencies and local property developers. Compared to public and non-profit agencies, artists are typically more proactive and less hesitant to initiate change within a community. For example, while the Alberta Community Plan was adopted in 1993 and highlighted Alberta Street as a corridor for revitalization, artist/developer Roslyn Hill had already started renovating her building at NE 14th Place where she opened the coffee house and art gallery. Murals were installed along the street long before the Streetscape Plan was adopted in 2000 with its *Recommendations for Public Art*. Moreover, the “pioneering” of artists effectively improved the neighborhood, allowing property owners, landlords, and developers to profit from the existence of the art community, directly by their presence and indirectly through public subsidies (the Storefront Improvement Program through PDC) and media attention.

Although Alberta has become more price prohibitive as the district gains recognition and its tarnished image fades, it has remained a diverse community filled with members of all classes, races, and ages. Whether or not these qualities that entice people to the community can outlast the changes is up for debate. The grassroots efforts to maintain the existing character may not be enough to thwart property speculation and commercial gentrification. Some may contend that it has already failed, although this is unlikely since there is much more room for growth and expansion along Alberta Street.

The future of Alberta raises many concerns regarding the perseverance of artists to maintain their presence and the ability to preserve the funky, independent vibe for

which it has known. New buildings on the street have significantly altered the streetscape, and many fear that these developments will shape the district into one for yuppies and the upper-middle class (Figure 32). A local newspaper recently announced the impending sale of the neighborhood icon bar Joe's Place, calling it "the last vestige of an era," causing many to speculate on what type of establishment will replace it and how it will fit in with the changing face of the neighborhood (Daly 2005). It is critical to keep the cultural mix of businesses and the variety of land uses, as these qualities contribute to the identity of the district. This is particularly important considering inevitable disappearance of the artists themselves, as witnessed in the SoHo district in Manhattan and the Kistlano neighborhood in Vancouver (Zukin 1982; Ley 2003). If the artists do in fact move out of the community, replaced by residents with higher levels of economic capital, and the business mix moves toward increasingly high-end boutiques and pricey restaurants, the Alberta district could lose its identity and become

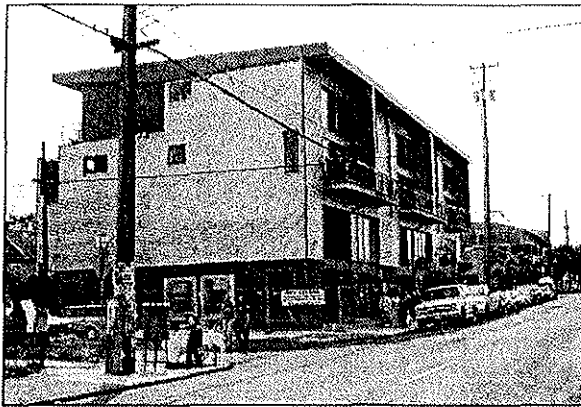


Figure 32: New buildings erected at NE 23rd (above) and NE 16th (right) that many residents feel are out of context with the scale of the neighborhood and its values.

simply another gentrified neighborhood in Portland with expensive housing and traces of its past as both a uniquely cultural enclave and an art community.

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APPENDIX A

The following pages list all commercial uses for the years 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005. Residential uses are not listed unless they changed to a commercial use at some point during the fifteen-year period. Data is from the 1990, 1995, and 2000 Portland Cole Directories and through field observation conducted in July 2005.

	1990		1995	
1400 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
1401	H&H Co.	undefined	JT Ehrlich Repair	ind/auto
1422	no listing		no listing	
1433	residential		no listing	
1438	no listing		Roslyns Garden Coffee	restaurant
1439	no listing		no listing	
1451	OR Scooter & Motrcy	ind/auto	Allen McQlla Bdy S	ind/auto
1452	no listing		no listing	
1476	no listing		no listing	
1488	no listing		no listing	
1500 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
1500	no listing		Alberta St App	ind/auto
1505	no listing		Bantu Garage	ind/auto
1520	no listing		no listing	
1522	no listing		no listing	
1526	Rodwick Ltd.	undefined	The Pub Tavern	restaurant
1532	no listing		no listing	
1533	Rose City Cab Co./Bantu Tow	ind/auto	Rose City Cab Co./Bantu Tow	ind/auto
1534	Angels Garden	undefined	Summer Funs Kids	undefined
1538	no listing		O S Variety	misc/nhbd

	2000		2005	
1400 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	1401 no listing		no name	gallery/studio
	1422 no listing		Imp	boutique
	1433 residential		Spank! Hair Salon	misc/nhbd
	1438 Roslyns Garden Coffee	restaurant	Tin Shed	restaurant
	1439 no listing		Wild Child	boutique
	1451 Floyd Williams	office	Bohio Studio	gallery/studio
			A Street Transmission	ind/auto
	1452 Salt & Pepper Supl	ind/auto	Fuel Café	restaurant
	1476 no listing		Talisman Gallery	gallery/studio
	1488 Sabin CDC	comm/religious	Sabin CDC	comm/religious
1500 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	1500 no listing		Alberta Co-op Grocery	misc/nhbd
	1505 no listing		Portland Auto Service	ind/auto
	1520 no listing		Everyday Wine	restaurant
	1522 Delias Attic	boutique	Lilith	boutique
	1526 no listing		Origin Flowers	misc/nhbd
	1532 Our Place	undefined	Retrospect Clothing (1532-34)	boutique
	1533 Rose City Cab Co./Bantu Tow	ind/auto	Rose City Cab Co./Bantu Tow	ind/auto
	1534 Discourage R&R	undefined	n/a	
	1538 no listing		Helser's on Alberta	restaurant

	1990		1995	
1600 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
1600	residential		residential	
1603	no listing		no listing	
1607	no listing		no listing	
1609	no listing		no listing	
1625	no listing		no listing	
1626	residential		residential	
1627	no listing		no listing	
1631	no listing		no listing	
1634	Talking Drum Book	undefined	no listing	
1639	no listing		no listing	
1700 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
1700	no listing		no listing	
1703	A Michtell Plmb	ind/auto	A Michtell Plmb	ind/auto
1705	Courtesy Janitorial	misc/nhbd	Courtesy Janitorial	misc/nhbd
1708	Royal Esquire Club	undefined	Royal Esquire Club	undefined
1710	no listing		no listing	
1714	no listing		no listing	
1718	no listing		no listing	
1724	no listing		no listing	
1726	NW Comm. Dev.	comm/religious	residential	
1732	no listing		no listing	
1734	no listing		no listing	
1737	McKinney Tmpl Church	comm/religious	Federal Employee	undefined

		2000	2005	
1600 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	1600 RAJ	boutique	Rust	gallery/studio
	1603 no listing		Enterbeing	gallery/studio
	1607 no listing		Frank Barnett Photography	gallery/studio
	1609 no listing		office	office
	1625 no listing		Halo Thai	restaurant
	1626 residential		Portland House of Umoja	comm/religious
	1627 no listing		Studio 1627	gallery/studio
	1631 Portland House of Umoja	comm/religious	Donna & Toots	boutique
	1634 no listing			
	1639 Sir Al's	misc/nhbd	Collage	misc/nhbd
1700 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	1700 no listing		Community Cycling Center	misc/nhbd
	1703 Kathy's Place/Portland City Plmb	ind/auto	Uniquely Yours	boutique
	1705 Courtesy Janitorial	misc/nhbd	Courtesy Janitorial	misc/nhbd
	1708 no listing			
	1710 no listing		Sir Al's Hair Salon	misc/nhbd
	1714 no listing		OR Tradeswomen Inc.	office
	1718 no listing		Mimosa Studios	gallery/studio
	1724 Soleilmoon Recording	office	Soleilmoon Recording	office
	1726 residential (Earl Clark)		Earl's Barbershop	misc/nhbd
	1732 Sisters in Action	comm/religious		
	1734 no listing		Sister's in Action	comm/religious
	1737 Highland United Church	comm/religious	Highland United Church	comm/religious

	1990		1995	
1800 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
1800	no listing		no listing	
1801	Joe's Place	restaurant	Joe's Place	restaurant
1804	no listing		no listing	
1812	no listing		no listing	
1824	Alberta Fish & Poultry	ind/auto	Alberta Fish & Poultry	ind/auto
1829	Addiction Diagnostic	undefined	residential	
1834	Goergies	undefined	no listing	
1900 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
1904	Sanders Automotive	ind/auto	no listing	
1934	no listing		no listing	
2000 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2000	no listing		no listing	
2002	no listing		no listing	
2022	no listing		no listing	
2016	Harveys Automotive	ind/auto	Harveys Automotive	ind/auto
2026	no listing		Joe & Mikes Appl	ind/auto
2035	Acme Glass Co.	ind/auto	no listing	
2038	Rex L Walker Plmb	ind/auto	Rex L Walker Plmb	ind/auto
2100 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2104	American Legion	comm/religious	American Legion	comm/religious
2127	Aladdin Finishers	ind/auto	Aladdin Finishers	ind/auto
2124	no listing		no listing	

	2000		2005	
1800 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	1800 no listing		Random Order Coffee House	restaurant
	1801 Joe's Place	restaurant	Joe's Place	restaurant
	1804 no listing		Tumbleweed Dresses	boutique
	1812 no listing		Yoga Shala NE	misc/nhbd
	1824 Alberta Fish & Poultry	ind/auto	vacant	
	1829 Advantage Real Estate Dev	office	Alberta Street Accupuncture	office
	Alberta Station Ballroom	misc/nhbd	Acadia Ballroom	misc/nhbd
	Ariela PRS Prdctns	office	Alberta Talk	misc/nhbd
	The Food Alliance	undefined	Optic Nerve Arts	gallery/studio
	The Galaxy Bkg Co	undefined	chiropractor	office
	Outward Music Co	undefined		
	SG Mnr Intercnct	undefined		
	1834 no listing		vacant	
1900 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	1904 American & Import Shop	ind/auto	Best Auto Repair	ind/auto
	1934 no listing		vacant	
2000 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2000 no listing		Don Pancho Market/Taqueria	misc/nhbd
	2002 El Tianguis	misc/nhbd	n/a	
	2022 El Kiosco	misc/nhbd	Don Pancho Market/Taqueria	restaurant
	2016 no listing		vacant	
	2026 no listing		The Know	restaurant
	2035 Acme Glass Co	ind/auto	Acme Glass Co	ind/auto
	2038 Rex L Walker Plmb	ind/auto	Rex L Walker Plmb	ind/auto
2100 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2104 American Legion	comm/religious	American Legion	comm/religious
	2127 Aladdin Finishers	ind/auto	Aladdin Finishers	ind/auto
	2124 no listing		Alberta Wash House	misc/nhbd

	1990		1995	
2200 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2203	no listing		no listing	
2204	Frank C Ralph & Son	undefined	Frank C Ralph & Son	undefined
2215	no listing		no listing	
2217	no listing		no listing	
2224	no listing		no listing	
2225	no listing		James Const.	office
2228	Jays Snackery	misc/nhbd	Tongan Community	comm/religious
2230	no listing		no listing	
2236	no listing		no listing	
2237	no listing		no listing	
2300 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2303	Ace Beauty Salon	misc/nhbd	no listing	
2315	no listing		Tanks Auto Detail	ind/auto
2330	no listing		La Tienda Mxcn	misc/nhbd
2400 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2400	Dr David G Duncan	office	Dr David G Duncan	office
2401	no listing		no listing	
2403	B Kelly Upholstry	ind/auto	Rexall Rose	restaurant
2407	James Construction	office	Community Cycling Center	misc/nhbd
2415	James Car Wash & Detail	ind/auto	residential	

	2000		2005	
2200 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2203 Chez What Café	restaurant	Ciao Vito	restaurant
	2204 Kola Sales & Svc	ind/auto	vacant (under renovation)	
	2215 Onda Studio & Gallery	gallery/studio	Onda Studio & Gallery	gallery/studio
	2217 Medusa Hair Salon	misc/nhbd	Tribe of the Winds	gallery/studio
	2224 no listing		Healthy Pets NW	misc/nhbd
	2225 James Const.	office	vacant (under renovation)	
	2228 no listing		n/a	
	2230 no listing		Ped X Shoes	boutique
	2236 no listing		Zaytoon's (opening soon)	restaurant
	2237 Hatties Common Ground	misc/nhbd	Hattie's clothing	boutique
2300 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2303 no listing		Habro Mania	gallery/studio
	2315 Taylor Design	gallery/studio	Alberta Arts Pavillion	gallery/studio
	2330 Dora Campbell	undefined	vacant	
2400 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2400 Dr David G Duncan	office	Dr David G Duncan	office
	2401 Iona Handcrafted Books	misc/nhbd	Star E Rose	restaurant
	2403 Star E Rose	restaurant	n/a	
	2407 Community Cycling Center	misc/nhbd	Scary Monster Music	misc/nhbd
	2415 Borrello Sculpture & Design	gallery/studio	neon jones	gallery/studio

	1990		1995	
2500 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2517	residential		Sabin Community Dev. Corp.	comm/religious
2525	James Wallace	office	Alberta New & Used	undefined
2527	no listing		no listing	
2529	no listing		no listing	
2531	no listing		no listing	
2535	no listing		Bobbys Barber Shop	misc/nhbd
2540	no listing		no listing	
2600 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2615	no listing		no listing	
2616	no listing		no listing	
2622	no listing		Kingsway Htg & Clg	ind/auto
2624	no listing		D-P Printing	undefined
2631	no listing		Young Automotive	ind/auto
2640	Faustrolln Fxtr	ind/auto	Faustrolln Fxtr	ind/auto
2641	C&J Excavating	ind/auto	no listing	
2700 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2700	Vians Auto Svc	ind/auto	Vians Auto Svc	ind/auto
2712	no listing		no listing	
2714	K&C Auto Upholstry	ind/auto	K&C Auto Upholstry	ind/auto
2715	Muslim Comm. Ctr	comm/religious	El Nopolito	undefined
2724	no listing		no listing	
2738	no listing		no listing	
2739	no listing		no listing	

	2000		2005	
2500 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2517 Rubis on Broadway	undefined	All Teased Up	misc/nhbd
	2525 Chas Pizzeria Exotic Asian	restaurant restaurant	Halibut's	restaurant
	2527 no listing		vacant	
	2529 no listing		Ella's	boutique
	2531 no listing		EZ's Grill	restaurant
	2535 Bobbys Barber Shop Bobbys Universal Family Market Jhnts Tob & Accessories	misc/nhbd undefined misc/nhbd undefined	Marvin's Barber Shop	misc/nhbd
	2540 no listing		Dominion House of Prayer	comm/religious
2600 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2615 no listing		Alberta Sanitary Svc	ind/auto
	2616 Liberty Medical Lotts O Cars	office ind/auto		
	2622 Salon Technique Spears Prop Mgmt	misc/nhbd office	Majestic Styling Studio	misc/nhbd
	2624 no listing		Annie Mae's	boutique
	2631 The Ride, Inc	ind/auto	Thai Noon	restaurant
	2640 no listing		Videorama/West Coast Fitness	misc/nhbd
	2641 no listing		Woman Tree	gallery/studio
2700 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2700 Vians Auto Svc	ind/auto	Vians Auto Svc	ind/auto
	2712 Leah Kathleen Paint	gallery/studio	vacant/renovation	
	2714 no listing		vacant/renovation	
	2715 no listing		Bink's	restaurant
	2724 no listing		6 Days Artist Collective	gallery/studio
	2738 no listing		vacant	
	2739 no listing		Riggin's Remodeling	ind/auto

	1990		1995	
2800 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2805	Jess Auto Repair	ind/auto	Dale Holland	office
2815	no listing		no listing	
2817	no listing		La Sirenita	restaurant
2828	Steven Bryan & Assoc	office	Assoc. Western AGC	office
2839	Ptld Display Co.	undefined	Mex. Imports/Mi Ranchto Tqras	restaurant
2841	no listing		no listing	
2900 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
2901	Paint Specialists Lab	ind/auto	Paint Specialists Lab	ind/auto
2904	Repos	undefined	no listing	
2909	Albina Nhbd Mural	comm/religious	Albina Nhbd Mural	comm/religious
2913	no listing		no listing	
2916	Poulsen-Cascade	ind/auto	Poulsen-Cascade/Rainbow Tackle	ind/auto
2924	J Ehrlich Boat Repair	ind/auto	no listing	
2921	no listing		no listing	
2926	no listing		no listing	
2927	no listing		no listing	
2929	no listing		Farris Fashions	boutique
2934	no listing		Tendercare	comm/religious
2936	no listing		no listing	
2939	no listing		Macedonia Baptist Church	comm/religious
2940	B&R Sport Shoes	misc/nhbd	Gilberts Auto Repair	ind/auto
3000 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
3003	Appliance & Refrig. Hospital	ind/auto	Appliance & Refrig. Hospital	ind/auto
3012	no listing		no listing	
3024	no listing		no listing	
3033	no listing		no listing	
3039	Alameda Cleaners	misc/nhbd	Alameda Cleaners	misc/nhbd

	2000		2005	
2800 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2805 La Sirenita	restaurant	Tonalli's Donoughts & Cream	restaurant
	2815 no listing		La Playita Market	misc/nhbd
	2817 La Sirenita Market	misc/nhbd	La Sirenita	restaurant
	2828 Seabold Const.	office	Black United Fund of OR	office
	2839 Mi Ranchito Tqrs	misc/nhbd	La Bonita	restaurant
	2841 Delimas Enterprises	undefined	vacant	
2900 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	2901 Paint Specialists Lab	ind/auto	Paint Specialists Lab	ind/auto
	2904 Bernie's Southern Bistro	restaurant	Bernie's Southern Bistro	restaurant
	2909 Ojo Tntn Murals	comm/religious	Concordia Coffee House	restaurant
	2913 no listing		Mira	boutique
	2916 Poulsen-Cascade	ind/auto	vacant	
	2924 no listing		Jellyfish	
	2921 Glass Roots	gallery/studio	La Palabra/Fold Creperie	restaurant
	2926 Open Hand	gallery/studio	n/a	restaurant
	2927 Hi-Ih	gallery/studio	Hi-Ih	gallery/studio
	2929 Judee Moonbeam	gallery/studio	n/a	
	2934 residential		Bella Faccia (2928-2634)	restaurant
	2936 On Immigration & Education	undefined	Picasso Beads	misc/nhbd
	2939 Guardino Gallery	gallery/studio	Guardino Gallery	gallery/studio
	2940 Videorama	misc/nhbd	Frock	boutique
3000 block	Business Name	Business Type	Business Name	Business Type
	3003 Appliance & Refrig. Hospital	ind/auto	Appliance & Refrig. Hospital	ind/auto
	3012 Victory Outreach Church	comm/religious	Victory Outreach Church	comm/religious
	3024 Vita Café	restaurant	Vita Café	restaurant
	3033 no listing		Buffalo Gardens	misc/nhbd
	3039 Alameda Cleaners	misc/nhbd	Portland Fret Works	misc/nhbd

APPENDIX B

The following data analysis was extracted from a study conducted for a housing economics course during the Fall term of 2004. The purpose of the research was to determine if distance to Alberta Street had any effect on housing sales prices. It shows a brief summary of housing characteristics with the four block groups of the study area and a lack of correlation between distance and price.

Data and methodology

The taxlot shapefile from Metro's Regional Land Information System (RLIS) database provides information on each property within the Portland metropolitan region, which are linked to the lot's spatial coordinates within the city. This database lists the size of both the building and the property, ownership, site address, year built, most recent sale date and associated sale price, among others.

ArcGIS software was utilized to draw a half-mile buffer around the stretch of NE Alberta Street from 15th to 33rd Avenues. The buffer extends north to Ainsworth, south to Shaver, east to Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, and west to 42nd. Taxlots within the boundary were extracted and all properties not zoned single-family residential (SFR) were removed leaving 4,315 lots.

Some of the records listed relatively small building sizes such as two or ten square feet. After cross-checking a random selection of these properties on Portland Maps (the corporate GIS website for the City of Portland), it was discovered that most of these properties did in fact have a larger building on the lot. This could simply be the result of improper data entry or because the structure did not exist at the time of entry. It was thus deemed appropriate to remove all records that contained building sizes less than 300 square feet. Records were then removed that had a sales date prior to 1996, as well as any record lacking information – i.e. zero – in any one of the categories.

After scrutinizing the numbers at this point, it was noticed that properties within the Alameda neighborhood possessed sale prices that were disproportionately high compared to the rest of the data. Therefore those taxlots south of Skidmore and east of

15th Avenue were removed from the data set. The total number of records following the deletion of all said records is 2,619. For these remaining taxlots, the distance in feet was calculated from the centroid of the polygon to the closest point on Alberta Street. This field provided the basis for which the hypothesis could be tested.

Results

A multivariate regression was run using the following variables from the taxlot database: lot square footage; sale date; year built; and distance to Alberta. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables used. For the dependent variable, the data was normalized into price per square foot rather than using the sale price value given in the database. The low minimum value for the dependent variable is attributed to the fact that not all transactions within the data set were at arm's length.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
LOTSQFT	.0	15681.6	4747.52	1305.86
YEARBUILT	1889	2004	1928	24.16
SALEDATE	199601	200404	200020.06	239.81
SALEPRICE	1000	590000	140318.47	61172.24
NEAR_DIST	55	2636	1368	725
PSF	1.04	346.27	104.15	45.72

Table 4, Descriptive Statistics; N = 2,619

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-20466.794	632.557		-32.356	.000
LOTSQFT	-.001	.001	-.036	-2.139	.033
YEARBUILT	-.030	.032	-.016	-.955	.340
SALEDATE	.103	.003	.541	32.885	.000
NEAR_DIST	.002	.001	.024	1.447	.148

Table 5, Regression coefficients, p/s/f as dependent variable

As shown in Table 2, only lot square footage and sale date are deemed significant at the 95% confidence level. It is to be expected that those properties with a more recent sale date will have a higher price per square foot since the overall trend in housing prices has increased within the study period. However, there is no statistically significant effect of distance to Alberta Street on price per square foot, thereby proving the null hypothesis to be true. This variable is however more statistically significant than the year built variable; and there appears to be a negative correlation between year built and price per square foot. In other words, older homes tend to have a higher price per square foot. It should be noted that some properties included in the data set are not exclusively single family homes, but duplexes and other multi-family structures are incorporated into the analysis as well. The tendency for these types of buildings to be larger in size than typical single family houses could have skewed the price per square foot variable.