

**Improving the Social, Physical, and  
Economic Capital of an  
Urban Community through Residential  
Revitalization**

**Prepared by  
David Arbit  
Research Assistant  
Conducted on behalf of the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Rd. Federation  
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Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center

301 - 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone: 612/625-1020

e-mail: [ksn@umn.edu](mailto:ksn@umn.edu)

website: <http://www.npcr.org>

# **Improving the Social, Physical, and Economic Capital of an Urban Community through Residential Revitalization**

The Brewery Breakthrough:  
A comprehensive impact assessment report

By David N. Arbit  
For the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Rd. Federation,  
CURA, and the University of Minnesota  
Special thanks to George Latimer, Ed Johnson,  
Kris Nelson, Elissa Mahlik, David Bredemus,  
James Gabler, and Mary Wingerd  
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## **I. Abstract**

This undertaking seeks to evaluate the social, economic, and physical-infrastructural wellbeing of a St. Paul neighborhood as a result of a comprehensive residential redevelopment project. Nested within the West Seventh region of St. Paul, Brewery Town was named after the Jacob Schmidt Brewery that overlooks it. The redevelopment project has been a positive experience for the developers, residents, members of neighboring communities, city officials, and the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Road Federation. Zero residential displacement was the single most salient factor contributing to this success. Other factors include an enhanced sense of place, greater walkability, additional neighborhood amenities, increased homeownership, decreased vacancies, a revitalized tax base, improved accessibility to all forms of transit, the ability to better capitalize on close proximity to the river and the downtown, and the emergence of neighborhood alliances and coalitions. To illustrate this, this work will utilize a mixed methodologies approach that will include fieldwork, data collection, community interviews, GIS mapping, graphing, and financial analysis. Ultimately, neighborhood revitalization projects do have the potential to restore urban blight, reinvigorate and breathe new life into a community, prepare for future developments, and maintain and preserve the local historic charm. The Brewery Town project also demonstrates the livability and desirability of inner-city neighborhoods. The redevelopment of the actual Schmidt Brewery parcel would be significantly more challenging and less sustainable had it not been for the redevelopment of the Brewery Neighborhood.

## **II. Acknowledgements**

There are a handful of individuals and organizations that deserve credit and praise for their various forms of support for this project. First, without the financial and administrative support of the NPCR program within CURA at the University of Minnesota, this undertaking would not have been possible. Kris Nelson's leadership and support were also very much appreciated. Second, the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Road Federation played a central role in assisting with the datasets, interviews, historical information, and anecdotes that enriched, embodied, and enlivened this project. Ed Johnson deserves particular acclaim for his constant humor, networking capabilities, revitalization knowledge, development experience, charismatic leadership, and his uniquely wide reach within the West Seventh neighborhood. Lastly, there are various individuals including George Latimer, Betty Moran, Elissa Mahlik, David Bredemus, James Gabler, and Mary Wingerd who provided direct or indirect support for this project. I extend my deepest and most sincere gratitude to the aforementioned organizations and individuals. I am unquestionably indebted to you.

## **III. Introduction and Overview**

A city is a living organism. All cities intake certain raw materials and output finished products. Cities expand (sprawl) and contract (decay) over time. Every city is a complex, hierarchical network of arteries and veins, bringing ideas, goods, people, and services to and from the heart. Cities can reproduce secondary or tertiary spinoff cities. Each city has highly specialized body parts—an economic engine (institutions and jobs), a political engine (municipal governance), a financial engine (markets and banks), and a cultural engine (music, arts, theater, etc). Cities may become economically or socially ill.

A city has self-cleansing mechanisms such as police, planners, and politicians to cleanse itself of these ills. Cities also evolve over time, finding it difficult to resist modernity. Part of that evolution manifests itself physically. Hence, architects and developers update the physical landscapes and streetscapes of our communities. The other part of that evolution a paradigmatic shift in our collective thinking about urban planning, community revitalization, and neighborhood development in order to create and foster healthier, more sustainable communities. This work will outline the impact of these physical updates as they have recently occurred in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Just outside of downtown St. Paul, Minnesota lives a small community of families and individuals who comprise the lifeblood of “Brewery Neighborhood.” Brewery Neighborhood is the region immediately surrounding the Jacob Schmidt Brewery on West Seventh Street (see Appendix I Figure I). It is in Ward 2, Planning District 9, between Interstate 35E and Shepard Road. It is bounded on the north by Grace Street, on the east by Colborne Street, on the south by Palace Avenue, and on the west by Erie Street (see inset map of Appendix IV, Figure 12). St. Paul’s Brewery Neighborhood, known to locals and residents simply as “Brewery Town”, recently underwent some drastic redevelopment work. Though it still maintains its urban-historic-brewery charm, Brewery Town not only has a very different face than it did 10 years ago, it also is composed of many new and different faces.

This undertaking will address the impacts of some of those micro and macro transitions in the urban, geographic, cultural, socio-economic, and financial landscapes of Brewery Town. It will also allude to or touch on New Urbanism, transit-oriented neo-traditional development, the principles of smart growth, notions of neighborhood vitality,

sustainable development, place-making, as well as the stability of individuals and families in the brewery region. Particular emphasis will be placed on development with a human face, which positions humans at the center of any development project (as opposed to monetary incentives or political capital). In this case, this will mean development without displacing existing residents, which can be challenging. It will also highlight the centrality of community interviews and residents' concerns and expectations regarding the redevelopment of *their* neighborhood.

In short, the Brewery Breakthrough redevelopment work has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for the developers, residents, members of neighboring communities, city officials, and the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Road Federation. However, this is a difficult claim to make, since only time will tell how the project sustains itself over the long term. Nevertheless, any residential development project that displaces zero residents is a relative success when compared with most other national or international development undertakings (Johnson, 2007). That certainly pleased residents and homeowners, some of who have lived there for several decades. Furthermore, the increased property values brought about by the brewery project meant higher property taxes for the city. Lastly, in light of the tentative blueprints for the mixed-use development project planned for the actual Schmidt Brewery parcel, values and taxes should be expected to increase even further. This may have mixed results on the neighborhood. It will benefit some residents who may gain stronger equity due to more valuable assets (namely, their house). Conversely, it may also displace certain lower-income residents who can no longer afford their mortgage or property taxes. This work will not fully address the development impact of the Schmidt Brewery project, however,

due to time and data constraints. Besides, the brewery project (not to be confused with Brewery Town project) has yet to take shape, as the plans are still in the tentative phases.

#### **IV. Methodologies**

What this work will do is further explain the risks, the hurdles, and the successes associated with neighborhood revitalization, specifically as it has occurred within the context of Brewery Town. This requires the examination and analysis of a number of indicators, maps, one-on-one and phone interviews with community members, and primary on-the-ground fieldwork. It is also important to examine the numbers that were calculated from the data collection; the extent of mathematical rigor hardly exceeds basic knowledge of totals and averages. Comparisons of pre-development versus post-development Brewery Town will also be emphasized. Lastly, the financial component—which is mainly comprised of municipal grants and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) proposals—is also an important piece of this holistic approach to a neighborhood development assessment.

This study will employ a mixed methodologies approach to neighborhood development so as to gain a holistic understanding of what is actually happening on the ground. Specifically, it will utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer the driving question “What was the impact of the Brewery Breakthrough Project?” and “Was that impact shared across the members of all parties involved?” Of course, some other questions—perhaps demographic inquiries—arise as well, and those will be answered by mapping the West Seventh neighborhood and the City of St. Paul in the appendices. The maps are part of the quantitative section (along with the charts and TIF computations); while the interviews, fieldwork, and scholarly components of this work

comprise the qualitative section. This mixed methods approach is highly effective since it calls for a diversity of assessment tools and criteria. If one assessment approach is persistently lacking, flawed, or noninformative, others are used as backup in order to help answer the driving question. This approach also evaluates a very complex and multi-faceted development project on multiple, complex levels. Lastly, the numbers may not capture how residents feel on a day-to-day basis. Numbers also cannot capture neighborhood pride, which is a very much alive force in the Brewery Neighborhood (Wingerd, 2007; Bredemus, 2007).

## **V. A Brief History: Familystyle, Deconcentration Policies, and the STAR Proposal**

Before answering our driving question, it is worthwhile to embark on a brief journey through the history of Brewery Town. Before Ed Johnson and the West 7<sup>th</sup>/Fort Road Federation completed the Brewery Breakthrough project, West 7<sup>th</sup> Street was historically known for its high concentration of group homes owned by Family Style Homes Incorporated (Johnson, 2007; Bredemus, 2007; Wingerd, 2007). In fact, long-term resident David Bredemus (2007) claims that the West Seventh neighborhood used to be a “mental health ghetto.” This translated into chronic under- and disinvestment in the region. Mentally challenged patients typically do not generate much income, which led to an income vacuum in Brewery Town.

Historically, over one-third of the parcels and structures in Brewery neighborhood were used as group homes for mentally ill patients (Johnson, 2007). However, with the onset of local deconcentration policies in St. Paul, Family Style Homes was effectively forced to leave Brewery Town. This left a human vacuum in the neighborhood (see Appendix I, Figure 4 for vacancies along Duke Street). Ed noticed that a one-time

opportunity existed that would not present itself for decades to come—if ever. He set out to “demonstrate the potential of an inner-city neighborhood to offer a new level of desirable urban living, with a broad range of affordable housing options” (Johnson, 2007). Some of the many benefits were the restoration of any blight in the neighborhood, a substantially increased tax base, new and highly viable living opportunities, and the revitalization of an urban community with such a rich history. Before the results came, however, Ed had to fund the entire project. The STAR (Sales Tax Revitalization) grant and the city’s planning department provided some of the funding, while other sources provided much-needed additional funding in order to actualize and operationalize the Brewery Breakthrough project. The following chart should provide a solid sense of where the rest of the funding came from.

*Brewery Breakthrough Funding Chart*

Lender:	\$5,460,000
Equity:	\$1,000,000
MHFA:	\$300,000
Livable Communities:	\$700,000
PED Houses-to-Homes:	\$900,000
PED New Construction:	\$880,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$9,240,000</b>

(PED stands for Planning and Economic Development, a department of the City of St. Paul and MHFA stands for the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency).

**VI. Neighborhood vitality**

In addition to funding, conceptualizations of vitality must also play a central role in a development assessment. However, implicit in any development impact assessment is a secondary question. If one wants to determine whether the impact from a development was positive or negative, one must also determine just what are the positive and negative indicators of neighborhood vitality. As mentioned, the project did not

displace any residents, which would be the worst possible impact of any development.

However, there are a variety of other indicators—some formal and some informal—that serve as a good way to evaluate neighborhood vitality. The formal indicators are as follows in no particular order:

- 1) Vacancies
- 2) Income (relative to rest of city)
- 3) Educational Attainment
- 4) Owner-occupied housing units
- 5) Parcel and Lot Appreciation Rates
- 6) Residential Displacement
- 7) Diversity

These are very useful tools by which to evaluate the vitality of a neighborhood, or the impact of a project on neighborhood. Cartographic representations of these variables may be found in Appendices I through IV. On the other hand, some of the less formal indicators also give us a good sense of neighborhood vitality or community health. The less formal indicators are as follows:

- 1) Investment in outside of home (siding, paint, porches)
- 2) Aesthetic landscaping (green integration,
- 3) Volunteering in political organizations or church groups
- 4) Gardening (though historically a highly classed activity)
- 5) Newspaper subscriptions (do people care about what is happening in their community?)
- 6) Curb appeal (Are streets swept and sidewalks tidy? Or is their trash and litter everywhere?)
- 7) Block clubs and block parties (national night out)

By no means are either of these lists exhaustive, but it gives us an idea of the formal, quantifiable approaches to neighborhood vitality as well as the more informal, qualitative aspects. For example, the degree of sprawl, proximity to major transportation networks, local life expectancy, residential mobility, neighborhood walkability, and others may enrich similar studies. The informal indicators will not be pursued fully in this study, due

to time and data constraints. Nevertheless, the community interviews provide some candid and highly pertinent information regarding these particular indicators.

## **VII. Brewery Breakthrough Begins to Take Shape**

The Brewery Breakthrough project has proven itself on all levels of evaluation. The plans called for the comprehensive residential redevelopment of a 4-block neighborhood that formerly housed the 25 previously mentioned residential structures owned by Family Style Homes, Inc. Combined with funds from existing programs, the MHFA Community Rehabilitation Program, and the Metropolitan Council's Livable Communities Demonstration Program, Brewery Breakthrough has shown that an inner-city neighborhood can offer highly desirable urban living opportunities while offering a range of housing options (Johnson, 2007). The brewery project was situated in a region with expanding employment opportunities, immediate access to transit networks, bicycle paths, pedestrian walkways, and automobile transportation is also immediate. With these ends in sight, a combination of rehabilitation, demolition, and new construction has resulted in a neighborhood with historic charm and renewed energy. By connecting to the riverfront, the Brewery Neighborhood is able to take advantage of St. Paul's greatest asset.

The Brewery Breakthrough proposal, at the time it was drafted, was wholly consistent with the Randolph/Brewery Small Area Plan (passed by the community in 1995). The proposal includes several recommendations from it, including the following:

- 1) Increasing the Area Population: 52 housing units will be developed or rehabilitated and the accompanying purchasing power will assist in fostering commercial revitalization on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 2) Clean Up/Renew/Restore Residential and Commercial Structures: A total of 64 structures will be addressed and assistance to existing owners for financing and

construction information will be marketed to the community. The Federation will also attempt to raise additional funds in order to attain neo-traditional designs in the area.

- 3) Continue to Create Connections to the Mississippi River: Funds to establish public spaces and the immediate riverbluff are in the proposal and the Federation has had extensive input in the design of the new Shepard Road realignment, which will improve the neighborhood's connections to the River Valley.
- 4) Work with Minnesota Brewing Company to Improve Appearance: We will be working with the Brewery to improve their street frontage and landscaping the triangle of land along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, including developing an alternative to the existing chain link fence.
- 5) The Federation Should Explore Acquiring the Familystyle Properties: The proposal includes the acquisition of 25 homes from Family Style thus providing an opportunity to dramatically impact the neighborhood over the 3 year phased development. Over this period, 30 existing structures will be rehabilitated and sold, 12 will be demolished, and 22 units of for-sale townhouses will be constructed. Additionally, funds will be used to establish an alley grid system to support neo-traditional development.

Increasing the area's population results in higher local densities, which curbs urban sprawl. The renewing and restorative effects of this development are visible while driving through the neighborhood. Connectivity with the Mississippi River is of ever-increasing importance. Besides the fact that there is a riverwalk planned for the downtown, St. Paul residents and businesses have largely lost touch with the river since it is littered with rusting grain barges and other blights. Also, working with the school and the brewery (both of whom officially endorsed the Brewery Breakthrough project) has proved beneficial by increasing the number of stakeholders, expanding the leadership community, raising awareness of development projects, and spearheading development conversations about the neighborhood amongst engaged citizens. Broader involvement in the brewery development has essentially meant equity in effects. If everyone shoulders a relatively equal burden, the risk was diffused, more parties were held accountable, and the positive impacts were shared and appreciated by all. In fact, citizen participation alone comprised \$183,240 of the development budget (Johnson, 2007).

This indicates that the members of the West Seventh community not only have faith in the development abilities of Ed Johnson and the Federation, but they were also willing to personally invest in this task.

The proposal goes on to discuss neo-traditional development, and it also alludes to transit-oriented development. Neo-traditional developments emphasize the social aspect of neighborhood life. They are also known for their walkability, historic charm, mixed-use planning, high densities, green spaces, and open community spaces. Transit-oriented development is fairly self-explanatory; it is simply development that emphasizes close proximity to major transportation networks. What's more, since the Central Corridor Project was officially given the go-ahead, transit-oriented development in St. Paul must necessarily be forward-looking. Central Corridor will only improve the connectivity of the neighborhood and mobility of its residents. This will only solidify the net positive impact that the Brewery Breakthrough project had on Brewery Town, since residents will be more mobile and better connected.

### **VIII. Impacts and Results**

Transit and neo-traditional development aside, there were many other tangible benefits brought about by the joint rehabilitation and new construction project. For example, Brewery Breakthrough produced the following impacts.

- 1) 30 houses rehabilitated and sold in 3 years 1998-2000
- 2) 12 structures were demolished in 1998
- 3) 22 new residential townhouses constructed and sold in 2 years 1998-1999
- 4) Increase the homeownership level from 35% to 55%
- 5) Undertake public improvements and establish an alley system to increase the housing density and tax base of the area by 100%

(Johnson, 2007)

The three-way combination of rehabilitation, demolition, and new construction is a far more intentional and deliberative balance than most initially perceive it to be. The only structures that were demolished had cracked foundations or other threats to structural integrity and had deteriorated to the point where rehabilitation would not have been cost effective. In other words, the cost of rehabilitation would have either approached or exceeded the cost of new construction. Furthermore, new construction could introduce the sort of higher densities and other aspects of neo-traditionalism and smart growth into the urban landscape that the old housing stock simply could not attain. Lastly, this combination was intended to create a greater sense of place, among other aesthetic and functional developments in the neighborhood.

Both quantifiable and non-quantifiable positive impacts continue to arise from the Brewery Breakthrough project. Regarding tax gains, the Federation's initial estimates were slightly high. What follows is a summary of the community, economic, and housing benefits created by the brewery development project. It also highlights the projected tax increases and employment impacts.

1) *Projected Tax Increases:*

\$50,000 current property taxes payable annually  
\$100,000 estimated future tax gains once project is completed  
\$50,000 net changes in taxes per year

2) *Community Development Benefits:*

Remove blight/pollution, rehab vacant structure, heritage preservation  
Improve health/safety, public improvements, goods and services  
Maintain and actually increase tax base,  
\$50,000 (at time of STAR fund application)  
\$110,000 (payable in 2007)

3) *Economic Development Benefits:*

Support industry, stabilize market value, provide self employment  
Create local business, retain local business, encourage entrepreneurship  
Generate private investment, support commercial activity, increase

## Women & minority involvement

### 4) *Housing Development Benefits:*

Increase homeownership, 22 new units constructed, 30 units converted  
Address special housing, retain homeowners, affordable housing  
Maintain housing, no rental units, 20 owner-occupied units

### 5) *Jobs impact, living wages apply:*

20 new construction jobs over 3 years.

(Johnson, 2007)

Although 20 new construction jobs seems fairly modest in the grand scheme of the labor market, the 22 new and 30 converted units will bring in 52 new homeowners. This is not meant to demonize renters, but homeowners typically invest more in the outside of their home and neighborhood, and participate more in block groups, neighborhood watches, and so on.

So what does this all mean for the wellbeing of the brewery community? Well, it definitely put Brewery Town in a more advantageous position. Brewery Town can now compete with other attractive residential developments. The work of the federation and in particular the leadership role it took in this development project will be absolutely critical for the vitality and sustainability of the actual Schmidt Brewery development (as tentatively planned by the Cohens). In other words, if Brewery Town were left undeveloped, a multi-million dollar mixed-use development project would overlook much urban blight. There would be vacancies, under-maintained homes, a lack of any sense of place or community, and many other unsightly and aesthetically unpleasing features.

However, the Federation did create 52 new, desirable, and affordable living opportunities within such close proximity to transit lines, the river, the downtown, and the proposed Schmidt Brewery development. Moreover, current residents have a very

strong sense of neighborhood pride. One of the residents displays a sign that boldly proclaims “This is Schmidt Country!” Mary Wingerd (2007) and David Bredemus (2007) both mentioned that they were proud of their neighborhood and wouldn’t allow anything that would compromise the integrity of their community. Both Mary and David also testify to the positive impact that the development has had so far, citing reduced crime and loitering, no more vacant structures, a renewed and refreshed neighborhood aesthetic, and a shared affinity for the new green spaces.

Besides newly integrated green spaces, the Brewery Breakthrough project also revitalized the tax base in the region (to be shortly discussed). To do this, the Federation increased the average home value—collectively a neighborhood’s largest asset. Figures I and II serve as comparisons between West Seventh median home sales and the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan region’s median home sales. The two are displayed in tandem for the sake of comparativity; West Seventh home sales are nearly meaningless if they aren’t understood in context. The graphs depict the timeframe from 1998 to 2001. That encompasses the groundbreaking of the brewery project as well as the aftermath and market-delivery of the homes. What the charts show is that West Seventh has consistently outperformed the metro in home sale growth rates by a minimum of 3.8% (1998) and a maximum of 19.4% (1999).

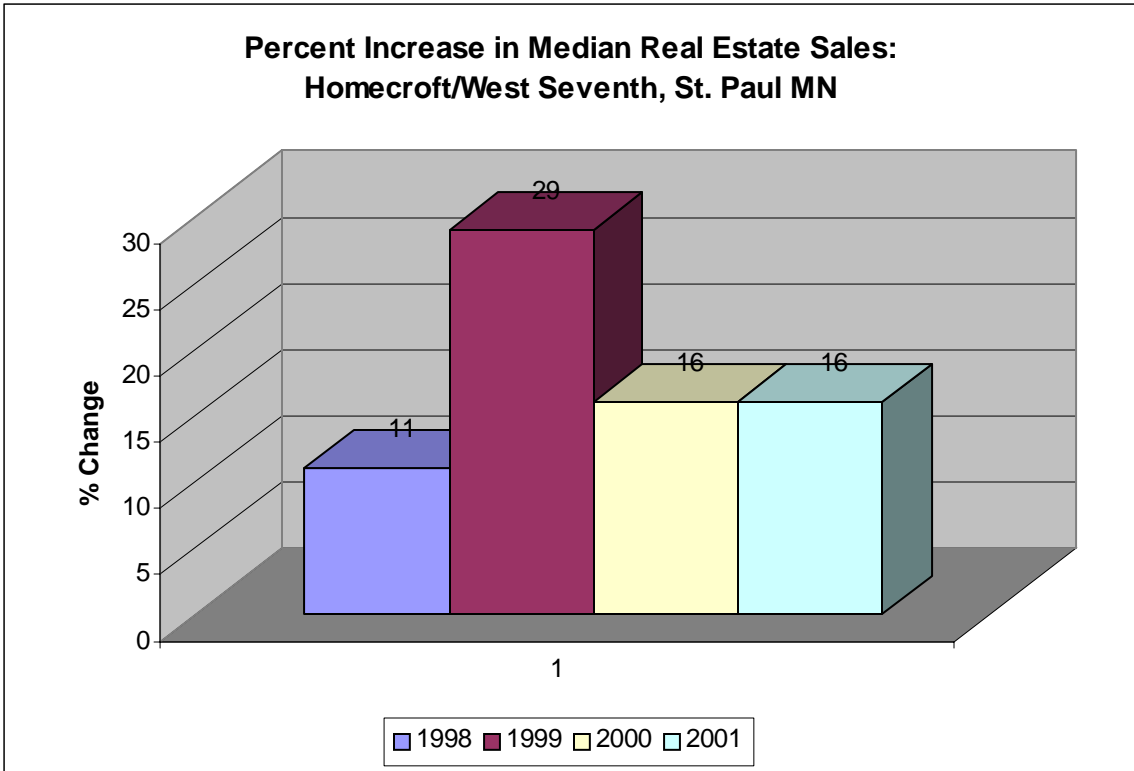


Figure I  
Data collected from Ramsey County Records and Revenue (2007)

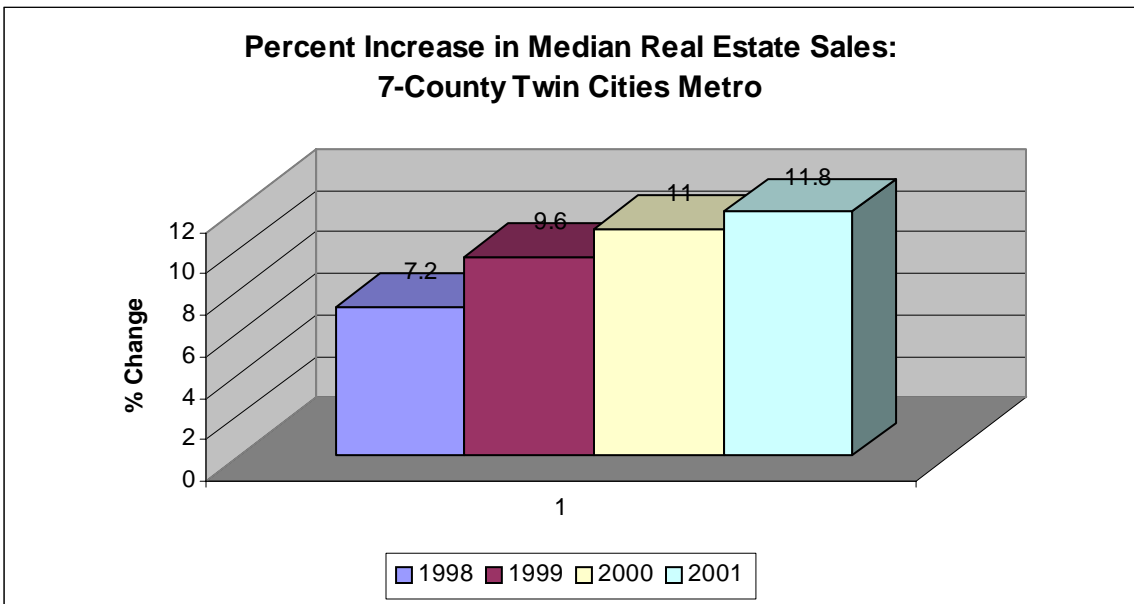


Figure II  
Data presented by Multiple Listing Service (2006)

What may not be so obvious is that the entire brewery development project almost perfectly coordinates with the peaks and valleys of the graph. For example, while

residents were relocated when development started in 1998, that year exhibited the slowest real estate sales growth rates. On the other hand, by 1999 most of the rehabilitated and newly constructed properties had reached the market for purchase. This is why 1999 displays the highest growth rates, since 30 homes were rehabilitated and 22 new homes were constructed (Johnson, 2007). Also worth noting is the fact that the market has its own peaks, valleys, and other fluctuations. Another important note is that these figures represent rates of change. Even though the Homecroft/West Seventh percent increase in home sales figure was at 16% for both 2000 and 2001, this actually indicates positive, upward growth in home sales. A static growth rate means positive growth, even though the rate of change of the growth rate remained stable.

*Brewery Breakthrough Financial Mathematics and Tax Increases*

On the topic of positive sales growth, it's important to examine the financial impact of the Brewery Town development. What follows are calculations performed on figures collected from Ramsey County. To see where these numbers came from, please see Appendix V Figure 14.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total Brewery Neighborhood taxes in 1997} &= \mathbf{\$24,175} \\ \text{Total Brewery Neighborhood taxes in 2007} &= \mathbf{\$109,676} \\ \text{Tax 2007 - Tax 1997} &= 109,676 - 24,175 = \mathbf{\$85,501} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the increment figure is at an average of \$8,550.10 per year

$$\mathbf{\$85,501 / 10 \text{ years} = \$8,550.10}$$

So, **\$85,501** is the total additional tax revenue generated solely by the Brewery Town redevelopment. This does not include the rest of the taxes generated by the broader West Seventh Neighborhood. It also does not reflect the increased asset value of homes and the improved borrowing power and increased wealth that it brings.

$$\mathbf{\$85,501} = \text{total yearly tax revenue from start of development to present time}$$

Since taxes are collected annually (actually monthly but there is no continuous compounding, I will call it annually) it is necessary to use the annual figure (\$8,550.10). James Gabler (2007) and Ed Johnson (2007) both suggest utilizing a 25-year TIF proposal (for Smith Avenue and other future development proposals). This will maximize the utility and revenues generated by the development. It will also invite more sources of funding for the Smith Avenue development. Hence, a 25-year time horizon for the retrospective TIF will be used for the Brewery Breakthrough calculations. This should be used as justification for a Smith Avenue development.

$$\$8,550.10 \times 25 \text{ years} = \mathbf{\$213,752.50}$$

So, the Brewery Breakthrough project would have generated **\$213,752.50** in city tax revenue over the span of the TIF. It still will generate this revenue, but the city will not be repaying any portions of the cost of development (aside from what it had already contributed to the budget). The City of St. Paul—in addition to other public and private sources of funding—should invest in similar development projects that not only increase the quality of life for city residents, but also generate substantial revenue for the municipality. Also, this sort of development work can set the stage for larger scale mixed-use developments.

Although the initial projected tax gains were estimated to be between \$24,000 and \$54,000 (Johnson, 2007; Gabler, 2007), the project actually generated \$85,501 annually. In short, this means that the Brewery Town development project outperformed projected increases by an average of \$40,000.

There are several considerations to take into account when dealing with these figures. First, depending on a particular parcel's valuation history and any value-added improvements, the tax figures used are highly likely to fluctuate. That being stated, it is far more likely that the annual taxes will only increase in Brewery Town because of the proposed mixed-use development project that will positively influence land and home values. Second, TIF timeframes vary from 10 to 25 or more years. If the value gains were so great, for example, then the developer could technically pay off the loans early and end the TIF designation prematurely.

It is important to move beyond a strictly financial perspective on any development project. Leonard Schwartz (the realtor for the newly constructed Riverheights Townhomes in the Brewery Neighborhood development) has provided some figures that

highlight the characteristics of the new homebuyers. His brief buyer description is as follows:

*Riverheights Demographics*

Of the buyers: 12 greater than 40 years of age  
11 less than 40 years of age  
50/50 between city/suburb buyers  
There were 10 first time homebuyers  
¾ of buyers work in St. Paul  
10 units have sold so far, mostly first time homebuyers who needed more space for their children

This provides some understanding of the type of residents that the brewery project has attracted. As Leonard's figures show, the Riverheights portion of the Brewery Breakthrough development did in fact attract new resident not only to Brewery Town but also to the City of St. Paul. The centrality of job proximity also manifests itself in the work figure.

**IX. Data Limitations**

By far the most lengthy and demanding part of this entire undertaking was acquiring the appropriate data. Department supervisors did not know where to send me to find the information that I needed. The most critical piece of data was parcel valuation data for 2 non-consecutive years. After being bounced from Abstracts and Torrens, to Records and Revenue, to Valuations (all entities within the Ramsey County Government Center), I was finally directed to someone who could help. So someone threw me in front of a password protected computer and said, "I hope you're familiar with our ACS, CAMA, and IRIS databases." To which I replied, "Familiar with your what?" To make a long story short, acquiring the data was a major endeavor and I had to overcome countless hurdles. You may be thinking, "Isn't this all public information?" Yes. It is.

But that doesn't mean that accessing and acquiring the data is necessarily easy or free. The powers that be make the public jump through scores of hoops just to get simple information. After approximately 3 weeks of bureaucracy and counter-bureaucracy, I found myself sitting in front of a very old-fashioned machine squinting to read the tiny print on microfiche film. As it turns out, Ramsey County hadn't transitioned to digital records until very recently. Many of the older records that I needed to collect in order to complete an impact assessment were incredibly difficult to access. In sum, there is a profound lack of data transparency and formal accountability within Ramsey County. The data acquisition phase took up more than half of the time dedicated to this work.

## **X. Community Interviews**

Even though they are so difficult to collect, numbers and figures can only take you so far. There needs to be a human face attached to the challenge of community redevelopment. To do this, I conducted formal interviewing with a diversity of project leaders, engaged residents, and individuals with specifically relevant experience and expertise. The most common frustration with the interviews was that my informants spent too much time expressing their excitement about the mixed-use Schmidt Development plan. The interviews were extremely helpful nonetheless.

David Bredemus was the most concerned with the neighborhood looking artificial. Having grown up in Brewery Town, he cares deeply about the character of his neighborhood. He feared that Brewery Town might look contrived after development completion. His ideology was, "Save everything you possibly can." He asserted that the older buildings and generational footprints were what gave the neighborhood its character and charm. Predictably, David personified Brewery Town on more than one occasion.

He was an invaluable informant, since he had such a thoughtful, internal perspective on the community. In David's eyes, Palace and Monroe streets are the heart and soul of West Seventh; the brewery was an undeniable symbol of West Seventh. He stated over and over, "Historic preservation is an innate good." A strong sense of place was extremely important to David, having grown up in the neighborhood. This may inform his firm stance against major changes to the neighborhood. Once the development was said and done, even David claimed it was a net positive impact.

Mary Wingerd would agree with David Bredemus on most points. Mary is a historian and has published several books. She spent a substantial amount of time comparing and contrasting neighborhood stability with housing affordability. She feared raising property taxes too much, but was relieved to hear that no one was displaced by the changes in the neighborhood. This launched us into a (re)gentrification conversation. Mary mentioned the growing importance of historic tourism. As a scholar, she was very comfortable saying that "St. Paul has an almost European feel to it." She also asked a very important question, "What type of development can this location [Brewery Town] actually sustain over time?" Mary concluded by declaring, "People must conceptualize West Seventh as real destination." "The Excel Energy Center helped with that, but almost exclusively the bars and restaurants just outside of the downtown, we still need to do more."

George Latimer was mayor of St. Paul for more than 20 years. He brings a unique perspective, having been a practicing lawyer for quite some time and also having the honor of being called mayor. For George—in typical politician fashion—the main concern was whether the whole process was cost-effective. He questioned whether

rehabilitating and maintaining the old housing stock was actually more expensive than rebuilding it. He did give honorable mention to the immense economic and investment potential of Brewery Town, especially if current Schmidt Brewery redevelopment proposals proceed as planned. George continued to speak from this economic lens; just how much would land values appreciate? He was also concerned about displaced residents but was pleased to hear that no such displacement had taken place. He suggested doing feasibility studies regarding the proposed brewery development. George concluded by commenting on the immensely strong sense of place in West Seventh.

James Gabler has a long and successful history of urban development, both residential and commercial. He focused on the finances of the development. Jim also noted the complexity of serving 2 masters: the PED department and the residents of the neighborhood. He could not stop praising Ed for being so persistent and resilient. Jim discussed housing affordability, the interaction with Brighton Development Corporation, the STAR component, and deconcentration policies. He noted that there was a tendency towards homeownership in the neighborhood and that it was extremely important to maintain that trend. Jim attributed the success of this redevelopment to Ed's charismatic leadership (once again), but also to the fact that the neighborhood was a very contained, finite, and manageable redevelopment project. He went on to explain the stipulations of the livability and houses to homes grants. After discussing corporate credit backing and 501(c)3 bonds, Jim concluded by saying "No other CDC leader would put themselves right in the line of fire, right in front of the tanks like Ed did. Brewery Neighborhood owes everything to Ed."

## **XI. Map Appendices**

At the end of this report a variety of choropleth maps may be found. The maps fluctuate in purpose, from establishing ethnic and cultural patterns to identifying socio-economic and educational trends. Spatial-visual depictions of vacancies, population, and percent change in parcel value are also included. Appendix IV Figure 12 illustrates that there were several Brewery Town parcels that increased between 400% and 600% in market value, and two that increased more than 600%. In Appendix I Figure 3, it is clear that two of the four Brewery Town blocks exhibited higher levels of homeownership than the immediately surrounding parcels. Maps have the ability to convey an immense amount of data in a concise, intuitive graphical representation. All of the maps utilize US Census data (SF1, SF3, and ACS). What's important to note is that the last US Census was in 2000, thereby rendering these figures somewhat dated. Nevertheless, the maps help to establish a visual idea of what was happening in the West Seventh neighborhood and in the City of St. Paul around the time of the Brewery Town development project. In fact, since development started around 1998 and continued until 2000, the 2000 US Census may actually be more relevant than the 2010 census. In any case, it is important to gain a richer understanding of the social, cultural, economic, educational, and financial trends occurring on the ground in our region of interest.

## **XII. Fieldwork**

Ed did indeed play a central role in redeveloping the neighborhood, but what exactly did some of those redevelopments look like? The first impression of Brewery Town is that it is an attractive neighborhood with a great deal of historic charm just over a mile outside of the downtown. The Riverheights Townhomes have a thoroughly

contemporary feel, but they are intentionally integrated with the red brick motif running throughout the neighborhood. The new Riverheights construction projects also integrate nicely with the pre-existing housing stock as well as the rehabilitated homes. This integration seems organic. It also gives the neighborhood a sense of unity and cohesiveness; it evokes a sense of place. There is a surprising amount of green space integration as well. There are even trees in the alleys; but the alley system could be more naturally fused with the rest of the neighborhood. The livability factor is high as well, since there are plenty of benches, sidewalks, scenic overlooks, riverfront views, playgrounds for children, and highly manicured lawns and public spaces. There is also a great deal of flora in the neighborhood. Lastly, there are a few white picket fences that are aesthetically pleasing but may not fit in with the rest of the landscape.

### **XIII. Concluding Visions: Where to Go from Here**

Ultimately, neighborhood revitalization projects do have the potential to restore urban blight, reinvigorate and breathe new life into a community, prepare for future developments, maintain and preserve the local historic charm, and increase the tax base of a region. And this can all be done without displacing a single resident. Before embarking on development, it is important to establish supportive community partners—such as the school district and the Minnesota Brewing Company in this case. The Brewery Breakthrough project also demonstrates the livability and desirability of inner-city neighborhoods. Furthermore, when all stakeholders become active and personally invested in the development process, the outcome is almost guaranteed to be more compatible with the needs of all parties involved. Nevertheless, none of this would have been possible without the charismatic leadership of a single individual—Ed Johnson. He

saw an opportunity and he took immediate action to completely makeover a neighborhood that used to suffer from high vacancies (see Appendix I, Figure 4). For a community with such a rich history—and pride in that history—Brewery Town now offers affordable, modern urban living opportunities within a stone’s throw from all forms of transit, the downtown, the river, and a major mixed-use redevelopment project in the very near future. There is a great deal of green space and open community space; and the neighborhood is pedestrian-friendly. The redevelopment of the actual Schmidt Brewery would have been significantly more challenging and less sustainable had it not been for the redevelopment of the Brewery Neighborhood. Now, a thriving urban community with one of the richest histories in the entire metropolitan region has a future that looks just as bright.

#### **XIV. Works Cited and Interviewees**

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