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The University of Montana

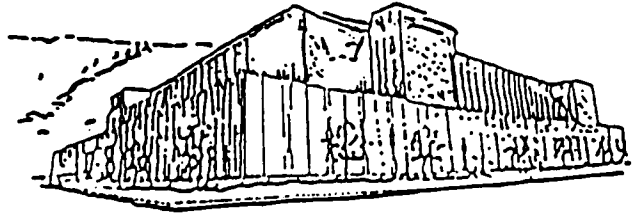
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LOCAL DEPENDENCY, LANDOWNER BEHAVIOR AND SUPPORT FOR
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION: COMPARISONS BETWEEN LOCAL AND
ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS IN HAMILTON, MONTANA

By

Bradley Fraedrich Davis

B.A., University of Minnesota, 1995


presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

The University of Montana
1999

Approved by:



Chairperson



Dean, Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

Davis, Bradley F., M.A., May 1999

Geography

Local Dependency, Landowner Behavior and Support for Downtown Revitalization: Comparisons between Local and Absentee Landowners in Hamilton, Montana (85 pp.)

Director: Evan Denney



This study examines the role of absentee land ownership in the downtown revitalization process in Hamilton, Montana. In many rural communities in the United States, non-residents control a sizable amount of the local land base. In Hamilton, absentee owners — defined in this study as those who do not hold permanent residence within the community — control nearly a quarter of the land in the downtown business district. How these absentee owners view local land development and improvement schemes is not well understood.

To better evaluate how absentee land ownership might impact downtown revitalization efforts, this study examines possible behavioral differences between local and absentee landowners in the way they actively develop and manage their downtown parcels. Data from a land use survey of the Hamilton study area found no significant difference toward land development or parcel management practices between the two land tenure groups.

Based on local dependency theory, this study also compares the level of support for a proposed downtown revitalization scheme among local and absentee landowners. Results from a landowner survey with limited samples found that while neither tenure group indicated overwhelming support for downtown revitalization, local landowners exhibited higher levels of support than absentee landowners. These results tend to support Cox and Mair's local dependency thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Rapid growth and development during the 1990s in the Rocky Mountain West has changed the commercial land use pattern in several of the region's smaller communities. Commercial development has shifted away from the highly-clustered Central Business District (CBD), which has historically served as the heart and soul of a small community, to vacant tracts on the edge of town. Thus, the unique character and architectural charm that once defined Main Street in many small towns have been replaced in recent years with "going-out-of-business" signs, empty storefronts, crumbling buildings, vacant lots and an overall picture of economic decline.

This paper examines how changing commercial land use patterns from the traditional core to the outlying fringe have impacted the community of Hamilton, Montana. It describes how local landowners in this growing community are re-examining the form and function of their downtown commercial district, and developing plans to ensure that this core area remains a vibrant component to their town's economic infrastructure. Moreover, this study is concerned with how private land tenure might impact future downtown revitalization efforts in Hamilton where absentee landowners — de-

defined in this study as those who do not hold permanent residence within the community — control nearly a quarter of the downtown land base.

This thesis contends that town planners need to better understand the role of absentee land ownership in the downtown revitalization process in order to properly evaluate future planning strategies and preservation programs, especially in rapidly growing communities.

In Montana, the changes in municipal land use and the rise of absentee land ownership has largely been a result of rapid population growth. Montana and the entire Rocky Mountain region — Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming — has in recent years undergone some of the highest rates of population growth in the nation (Shumway and Davis 1996). From 1990 to 1996, the population in Montana increased 10 percent from 799,065 to an estimated 879,372 residents, with two-thirds of this growth attributed to the influx of migrants moving into the state's mountainous western region (Von Reichert and Sylvester 1997). Studies have shown that much of this regional growth is driven by quality-of-life considerations attracting newcomers to the natural amenities and rural character of the northern Rocky Mountains (Ullman 1954; Rudzitis 1993). A recent study in Montana found that newcomers to the Greater Yellowstone Area were not attracted so much for employment prospects, but rather for the region's natural amenities and recreational opportunities (Williams and Jobes 1990).

The rapid influx of newcomers moving into the Rocky Mountain region has altered the traditional residential pattern of small-lot subdivisions situated near nucleated town-sites (Theobald, Gosnell and Riebsame 1996). Research on residential location preferences in Montana found that many newcomers prefer building their homes on remote sites away from population centers and into the countryside (Dalenberg et al. 1998). With more and more residents expanding into the countryside, a small town's CBD loses much of its economic and spatial advantages as a marketplace; such as centrality, accessibility, and high concentrations of vehicular and pedestrian traffic (Murphy 1972). Consequently, several commercial functions have moved out of downtown, establishing commercial "strip" developments at town's edge. This type of suburban-style sprawl, strung out along major transportation arteries and confined between valley walls, has come to define the town landscape in many growing communities in the Rocky Mountain West (Riebsame, Gosnell and Theobald 1996).

Urban sprawl has become a growing concern among Montana residents who want to protect the state's rural character and preserve their community's compact neighborhoods and districts (*Missoulian* 24 January 1999). In an effort to combat sprawl, planners have increasingly advocated downtown revitalization as a tool for promoting in-fill development, as well as conserving the open countryside that typically surrounds a small community (Porter 1997).

Rapid growth not only transforms the commercial and residential landscape in a small town, it can also introduce changes in the social landscape, especially between newcomer and "old-timer" residents (Jobes 1991). Studies have shown that most newcomers have different social, economic, and educational backgrounds than those of the native population (Stokes, Watson and Mastran 1989). In western Montana, where a sizeable number of in-migrants during the early 1990s were retirees or seasonal homeowners, there was a perception among many old-timers that wealthy newcomers from California — the so-called "cappuccino cowboys" — were invading the state and crowding out locals for jobs, housing and community services (Poten 1997).

The "newcomers versus old-timers" typology has been well documented in community sociological research over the past three decades. These studies typically find that newcomers oppose local growth and development, but support historic preservation, more than old-timers in an effort to preserve the rural amenities or "small town charm" that attracted them in the first place — the so-called "gangplank syndrome" (Spectorsky 1955; Graber 1974). Conflicting views between newcomers and old-timers inevitably lead to controversies in local affairs, making it difficult for planners in growing communities to build a consensus on land use and development issues. Whether or not this residential typology is appropriate for explaining differences between local and

absentee landowners in the context of downtown revitalization is a question for this research.

Two alternative explanations dealing more specifically with private land ownership and community development are (1) the "growth machine" theory and (2) the "local dependency" theory. According to growth machine theory, the land-based elite, such as local banks, utilities, real estate developers, landowners, etc., actively promote growth and development in their community because they directly benefit from the increasing exchange value of land (Molotch 1976). This theory seems to suggest that local landowners would be more supportive of downtown revitalization than absentee landowners, who presumably have weaker social and economic ties to a community and, therefore, "generally invest neither their personal capital nor energy in community affairs" (Flora et al. 1992, 266).

According to local dependency theory, firms or businesses with geographically limited investments in the built environment become dependent upon the health of a particular local economy (Cox and Mair 1988). This theory seems to suggest that local landowners, who presumably have larger investments of immobile capital (i.e. land, buildings) than absentee owners, would exhibit higher levels of support for local revitalization efforts in order to protect their long-term investments (Cox and Mair 1988).

Studying a private landowner's behavior (i.e. motivations and preferences) toward land development has become an

increasingly salient issue as planners recognize the importance of land tenure in determining the direction and nature of urban morphology (Adams and May 1991). It is the private landowner who determines how, and when, to utilize his or her holdings in light of social, economic, and spatial considerations (Platt 1996). Landowner support is especially critical in Main Street revitalization, which relies heavily on a cooperative approach to land use planning (Stokes, Watson and Mastran 1989). Empirical evidence has shown that private landowners must be convinced of the need for a plan (Sedway and Cooke 1983) and must be willing to cooperate during its implementation (Porter 1997) in order for a downtown project to succeed. Research, such as presented here, can assist town planners in evaluating and mobilizing support for downtown revitalization in communities where parcel ownership is fragmented and divided. This thesis contends that mobilizing support is especially critical in communities where a large segment of the downtown land base is controlled by absentee landowners who might not share the same attitudes and preferences as local landowners.

While much has been written in recent years about the influx of absentee property owners buying up land in the Rocky Mountain West and impacting the residential development pattern (Riebsame, Gosnell and Theobald 1996), little is known about the extent of absentee ownership in the region's smaller downtown business districts. Locals commonly assume that absentee-owned land lies fallow or underutil-

ized, thereby adding to the visual blight of the downtown area (Ratcliff 1949). But there have been no studies done in rural Montana to test whether absentee landowners actually utilize and maintain their downtown parcels differently than local landowners, or if there is a significant difference between these two groups in their attitudes toward downtown revitalization. This thesis examines and interprets some of these assumed differences using a case study approach.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this thesis is to study the role of absentee land ownership in the downtown revitalization process in a rural Montana community. It is contended that there are significant behavioral differences between local and absentee landowners in the way they utilize and maintain their downtown holdings, as well as significant differences in their support for downtown revitalization efforts. For town planners, understanding differentials in levels of support between these two ownership groups is instrumental in providing technical assistance to future downtown improvement projects.

This research also concerns the spatial distribution of absentee-owned land in a small town CBD. Such spatial information is useful to community planners when assessing where future land transfers or redevelopment projects are likely to occur, or when delimiting special taxing districts for

site-specific improvement projects within the downtown area. From a review of previous research in urban geography, this thesis contends that absentee-owned land will likely be located predominately in a downtown area's periphery rather than randomly dispersed throughout the entire district.

Finally, this study applies geographic information systems (GIS) desktop technology to demonstrate how a spatial data management system can be used for small-scale planning projects, such as downtown revitalization, in rural municipalities with minimal costs or staff time.

Community Study Area

Research was conducted in the town of Hamilton, Montana (Figure 1), a rural community located in the Bitterroot Valley in the southwestern part of the state. Hamilton has experienced rapid population growth throughout the 1990s, far exceeding both state and national averages. The town's population grew from 2,737 persons in 1990 to an estimated 4,059 persons in 1996, representing an increase of about 48 percent (Montana Department of Labor and Industry 1997). As county seat for Ravalli County — the fastest growing county in Montana during the 1990s — Hamilton serves as the administrative and commercial center for the valley, and was selected as a study site because it is exemplary of a smaller

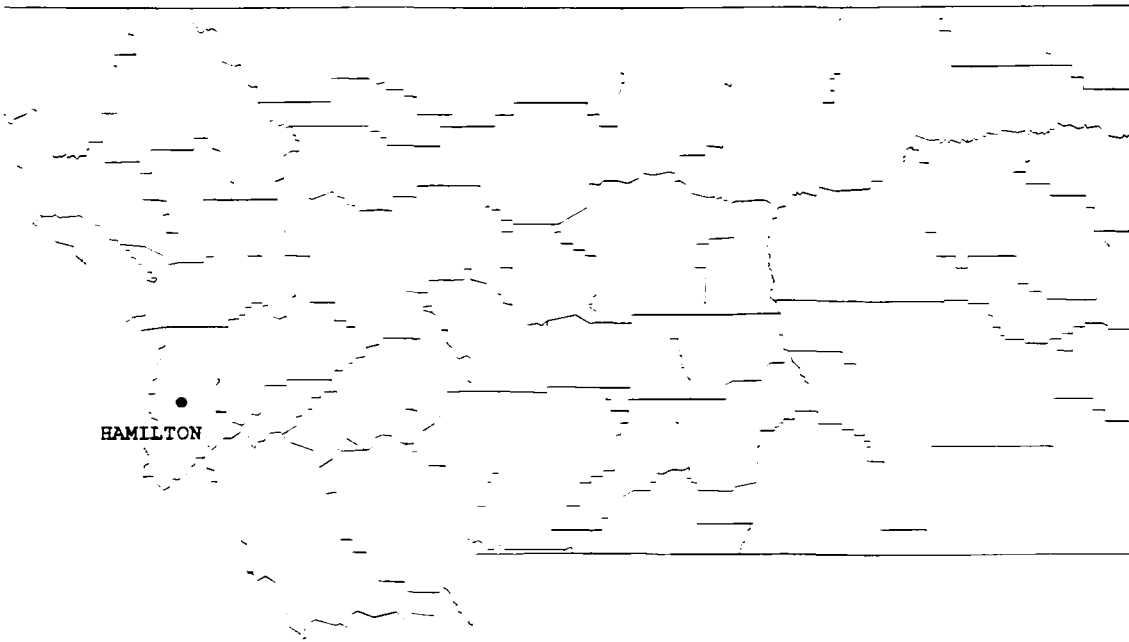


Figure 1. Location of study area (Hamilton, Montana)

growing community in the rural Mountain West interested in downtown revitalization.

Located along the Bitterroot River, Hamilton is predominantly built out within its existing city limits and has a broad mix of land development. It includes approximately 65 percent residential land; 15 percent commercial land; 10 percent industrial land; and five percent devoted to public land uses (Hamilton Comprehensive Plan 1998). According to the town's master plan, Hamilton has a number of commercial lots that are under-utilized and in need of rehabilitation. Within the city limits, there is enough land zoned for commercial development to serve a population of 35,000 (Hamilton Comprehensive Plan 1998).

As small towns like Hamilton expand in population, there is an increasing demand for commercial activities that provide goods and services. Commercial expansion in small towns typically develop in three distinct morphological patterns: (1) in the form of in-fill development on vacant lots, (2) in the alteration of existing structures for new uses, and (3) in the form of lateral expansion into outlying areas (Ratcliff 1949). In Hamilton, all three patterns have emerged, but it is the peripheral expansion that has caused the greatest concern among downtown businesses and landowners.

Throughout the 1990s, Hamilton's CBD has been experiencing retail decentralization, or leakage, which is the process of relocating retail activities from a town's core to its periphery (Chase and Pulver 1983). Retail activities have leaked out of downtown Hamilton to sites along Highway 93 north toward the high-growth areas of the county. Research has shown that commercial activity in these outlying areas tend to siphon off shoppers before they can reach the next inward area, resulting in a measurable decline in a small town's CBD (Berry and Horton 1970). In addition to retail leakage, Hamilton's CBD also faces retail competition from Missoula, Montana, located about 40 miles to the north. Competition from Missoula's large discount retail outlets, or "superstores" like Costco, Target and Wal-Mart, offer a greater variety of goods at lower prices through volume trading, thereby reducing the need for certain types of

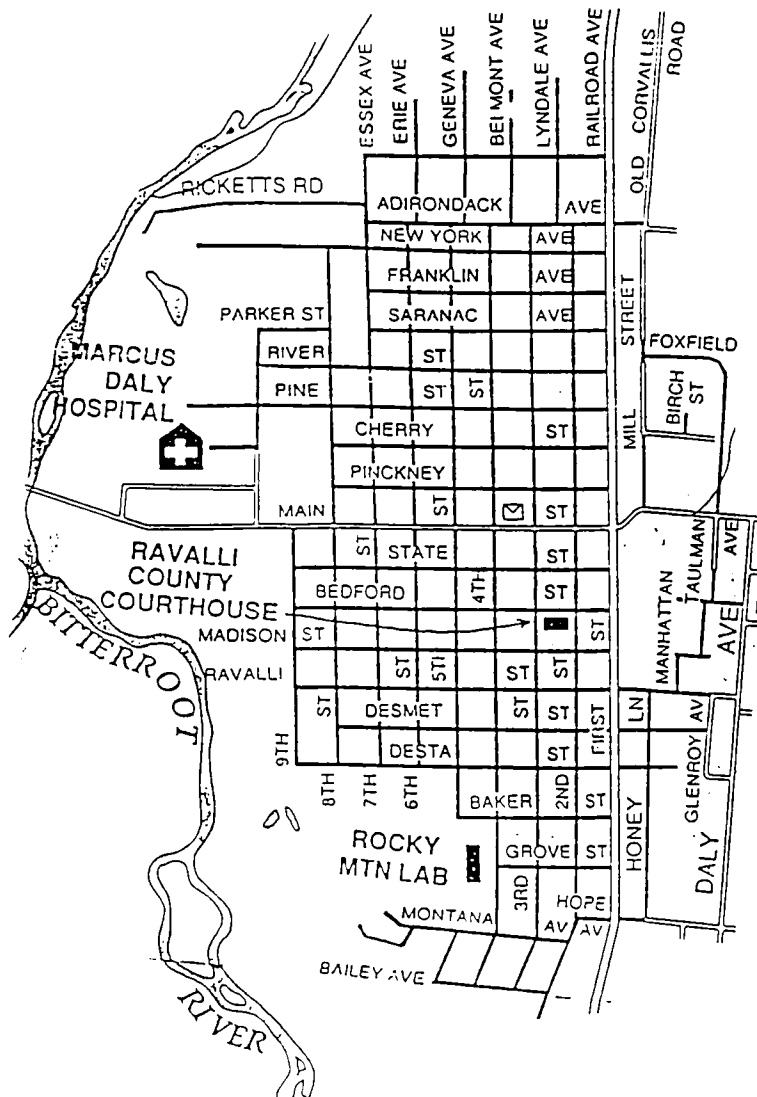


Figure 2. Street map of Hamilton, Montana

retail outlets in smaller tributary towns like Hamilton (Ratcliff 1949).

Local, regional, and national changes in retail marketing and commercial development have diminished the functional role of Hamilton's historic business district, which has been the center of consumer activities in the valley

since the town's incorporation in 1893. Hamilton's downtown district was platted using a grid-shape pattern, with streets and avenues oriented in cardinal directions (Figure 2). Like other townsites surveyed by railroad companies in the American West, Main Street in Hamilton was placed perpendicular to the railroad track, forming a T-shaped configuration. This configuration compelled all later development, both commercial and residential, to expand on one side of the railroad track in order to avoid potentially dangerous crossing points (Hudson 1985). Even up to present times, most of the built environment in Hamilton remains west of the railroad tracks. Interestingly, this historic T-shape configuration is responsible for many of today's traffic circulation problems bemoaned by downtown business and property owners.

When Highway 93 was constructed in the Bitterroot Valley during the 1960s, it was built to parallel the Northern Pacific railroad track as it went through Hamilton. This resulted in Highway 93 bisecting Main Street at the depot crossing. Consequently, much of the high-volume traffic on the highway speeds right past the town's Main Street turn-off, thereby reducing the level of drive-by exposure and convenience so critical to many downtown businesses.

More than a century after the town's founding, Hamilton's CBD remains an important place for economic and social activity. Several banks, the post office, and the county courthouse continue to draw valley residents to the downtown

district during the day, while the movie theater, community parades, festivals and street dances draw folks downtown in the evenings and on weekends. The district today is a mixture of older, multi-story commercial buildings facing Main Street; newer buildings and renovated Victorian-style homes on the side streets providing retail, service, or governmental functions. Older single and multi-family residential homes are located in the periphery. Commercial activities include an assortment of restaurants, clothing stores, gift shops, office supply stores, automotive services, banks, professional offices, churches and service organizations. In recent years, the downtown area has witnessed a discernible trend toward more tourism-based, niche retailing as Hamilton expands into a destination resort community for golfing, equestrian sports, fishing, hunting and wilderness camping. This trend is reflected in the recent establishment of more high-end gift shops, antique shops, casinos, coffee shops, art galleries, a candy store, an ice cream parlor and a small microbrewery.

It is amidst these changes in retail activity that downtown merchants and property owners are beginning to re-examine the form and function of the Hamilton CBD. In order to compete with newer "strip" development at town's edge and the proliferation of "big-box" retail outlets in Missoula, this coalition is seeking ways to fund improvement projects that would revitalize downtown Hamilton. Examples of improvement projects include: purchasing land to increase the

downtown's parking facilities; providing low-interest loans for storefront renovation; funding off-street and sidewalk improvement projects; repairing or replacing dilapidated traffic signs; hiring a crew to maintain a "streetscape" program; hanging entrance signs or street banners; grading unpaved streets or alleys; restoring residential space to the upper stories of downtown buildings; developing plans to eliminate unsightly overhead wires; or funding special activities and festivals that promote the downtown area (Stokes, Watson and Mastran 1989).

In 1997, a group of downtown businesses and landowners formed a coalition to explore the various funding mechanisms available to pay for improvement projects. The coalition discussed the possibility of forming a Business Improvement District (BID). A BID is a special taxing district where a group of property owners agree to an assessment based on a percentage of the assessed valuation of their land. The purpose of the BID is to fund improvements within their specified district (Houstoun 1998). BIDs are established consistent with state enabling legislation, defined by geographic boundaries, and have broad powers to plan, finance, and implement downtown activities (Clifford 1984). To form a BID in Montana, private property owners controlling more than 60 percent of the proposed districting area must sign a petition and present it for approval by the local governing body (Clifford 1984). The cities of Helena, Great Falls, Billings, Missoula and Bozeman have well-established BIDs. Ham-

ilton is the smallest Montana community considering such a proposal.

During a 1997 BID feasibility study, the coalition learned that a number of downtown property owners within the proposed taxing district did not hold permanent residence in the Hamilton community. Some local residents assumed that these absentee landowners would have no interest in paying specially assessed fees to improve Hamilton's physical infrastructure. Given interviews with coalition members, a general concern was expressed that a lack of support from these absentee landowners could adversely effect the BID approval process. Research done in one Montana community found that mobilizing support for BID formation among all private landowners is a critical element in the petition drive process (Clifford 1984). Preliminary fieldwork in Hamilton highlighted the need to better understand how absentee landowners felt about downtown revitalization in general, and what kinds of improvement projects they are willing to support in particular.

Case Study Objectives

The objectives of this study include:

1. An inventory of the extent and nature of absentee property ownership within the defined Hamilton downtown study area.
2. An analysis of the behavioral differences between local and absentee landowners (i.e. how they utilize and

maintain their property holdings) using field and quantitative techniques.

3. A survey of private landowners in the defined downtown study area to determine differences between local and absentee landowners in their support for downtown revitalization efforts.
4. Mapping absentee-owned parcels in the downtown study area to examine whether these holdings tend to be randomly dispersed throughout the study area or concentrated in the downtown periphery.

Case Study Design and Methodology

Delimiting Downtown Study Area

The Hamilton downtown study area (Figure 3) consists of 21 city blocks and 456 parcels, comprising about 40 acres of developable land. The method for delimiting the downtown study area is subjective, but not arbitrary. The study area boundary expands beyond both the locally recognized CBD zoning district and the proposed BID assessment area. Urban planners have stressed the importance of expanding downtown study area boundaries beyond the CBD zoning district in order to include those areas where the district is currently expanding (Chapin Jr. 1965); and those areas where future growth is likely to occur (Sedway and Cook 1983). Most of the research concerning CBD delimitation applies only to larger metropolitan cities. Murphy (1972), one of the

Hamilton Downtown Study Area



0 300 600 900

Scale in Feet

Bradley F. Davis

Figure 3: Hamilton Downtown Study Area

preeminent scholars on the subject, suggests that there is no applicable delimitation method for cities with less than 50,000 residents. However, for the purposes of this study, the "break in continuity technique" discussed in Murphy's book, *The Central Business District* (1972), seemed most appropriate for small urban places, and was used to delimit the Hamilton downtown study area.

The break in continuity technique requires the researcher to radiate out from the center of a downtown area and mark the spot on a base map where commercial uses give way to other types of land uses not typically associated with the CBD (Murphy 1972). It should be noted that determining this break in land use continuity is inherently subjective, especially in a small town like Hamilton. But because this thesis examines only one CBD, and does not propose to infer generalizations by systematically comparing two or more districts, this delimitation technique is appropriate for this type of single case study approach (Murphy 1972).

In August 1998, the Hamilton downtown study area was delimited by observing the break in continuity between traditional CBD land uses (i.e. commercial, service, financial, government, wholesale), and surrounding tracts of homogeneous residential land use (Griffin and Preston 1968) not associated with the CBD. The break in continuity method did not include commercial activities along Highway 93 near the railroad tracks. These activities emanating out from the CBD

are predominately highway-related — with on-site parking and ingress/egress points — and do not share the same functional characteristics as land in the CBD.

The downtown study area was further divided into the "concentrated CBD core" and the "transitional CBD frame" (Figure 4). The CBD core represents highly intensive commercial land uses while the CBD frame includes areas typified by mixed land uses, aging structures, vacant lots and a wide range of commercial and/or residential functions (Horwood and Boyce 1959; Preston 1966). In a small urban place like Hamilton, the CBD frame is difficult to determine and typically encompasses no more than a single block area. The CBD core-frame concept is used in this thesis to examine whether absentee-owned land is concentrated in the CBD frame or randomly dispersed throughout the entire study area.

Defining Parcel Ownership Groups



Ownership data were obtained from county plats showing individual parcels within the Hamilton downtown study area, referenced by lot number and block number with matching ownership notations. These data are organized according to two parcel ownership groups. *Local owners* are defined as those who had a 1997 property tax billing address with a Hamilton 59840 zip code. According to the Hamilton postmaster, this postal Zip Code Area encompasses all residents living within the city limits, as well as those residing within approximately five miles north, ten miles south, ten miles east,

Hamilton Downtown Study Area



0 300 600 900

Scale in Feet

-  Downtown Core
-  Downtown Frame

Bradley F. Davis

Figure 4: Study Area Core and Frame

and ten miles west of the city's municipal boundary. *Absentee owners* are defined as those who had a 1997 property tax billing address outside the Hamilton 59840 zip code area.

This method of ownership distinction was refined from previous research on absentee ownership and land use issues, most notably a recent county planning study conducted in Wyoming where ownership groups were classified as either county residents or non-county residents based on property tax billing addresses (McLeod et al. 1998).

Choosing the Hamilton Zip Code Area as the dividing line between local and absentee landowners was determined after a preliminary assessment of property ownership data. From this assessment, it was determined that severe limitations would be placed on this study if ownership distinctions were made strictly between county and non-county residents, or between city and non-city residents. Therefore, a conceptual "community region" was created between city and county boundaries. Because ownership data were compiled from address listings, the most practical method for distinguishing those owners living in the community region (local), and those living outside the community region (absentee), was by using a postal zip code area as the dividing line.

This thesis uses the sociological definition of "community" as a geographically defined locality where people interact and share a common sense of identity (Flora et al. 1992). Under this definition, this thesis asserts that *local* landowners living within a ten-mile radius of Hamilton will

have a higher degree of interaction with community members and develop a stronger sense of dependency on the Hamilton community than *absentee* landowners living outside the postal zip code area.

Land Use Survey Design

In September 1998, land use data were enumerated and mapped in the Hamilton downtown study area to determine any differences in parcel utilization between absentee and local landholders. Urban land use surveys are an important component of a downtown planning process, concerned with classifying and recording the commercial, residential and industrial use of space in an urban area (Chapin Jr. 1965; Stoddard 1982). The survey inventoried, parcel-by-parcel, all ground level activities in the study area using a field notation system (Appendix). Land use categories were developed from a literature review of similar CBD fieldwork conducted in larger metropolitan cities (Griffin and Preston 1968).

The land use survey was based on observation, and no attempt was made to gain access to buildings or enter private property. Where a building housed multiple functions at the ground level, only the dominant activity was recorded. Home businesses were recorded under the designated commercial activity.

In addition to land use, the survey recorded the condition of buildings and landscaping for each parcel. Because classifying visual elements such as architectural conditions

and landscaping is subjective, the results from this part of the survey were not used in any statistical analysis. However, the information was used to visually test the commonly held perception that absentee-owned property is managed differently than property under local control.

To maintain consistency, each parcel was judged on the same criteria. Parcels were coded "well kept" if the grass was adequately mowed or landscaped and the sidewalks were absent of any large cracks or buckles. Parcels were coded "moderate" if it displayed any signs of weeds or uncut grass and had minimal landscaping, or showed cracked and buckled sidewalks in need of major repair. Parcels were coded "unmanaged" if it displayed an abundant amount of overgrown weeds or grass and had no landscaping or sidewalks (Appendix).

Questionnaire Design and Administration

During the fall of 1998, a one-page questionnaire was designed, pre-tested and administered by mail to 80 Hamilton downtown landowners (Appendix). Survey recipients were randomly selected from a sampling frame of 127 private landowners in the study area. Names and addresses were obtained from county tax assessment records. From this list, local and absentee landowners were stratified and randomly selected. Both local owners (n=62) and absentee owners (n=18) surveyed during this period were asked to complete the same questionnaire.

Mail surveys have become increasingly recognized as a cost-effective alternative to telephone surveys and face-to-face interviews for gathering qualitative data in geographic research (Stoddard 1982; Feitelson 1991). The survey methodology used for this research loosely follows Dillman's (1978) Total Design Method. Dillman provided guidelines for designing the cover letter, the questionnaire and the follow-up. Due to budget constraints, and an acceptable response rate from the first mailing, no follow-ups were used (compared to three follow-up postcard mailings suggested by Dillman). The overall response rate for the landowner survey was 61 percent, with a significantly higher response rate from absentee owners (94 percent) than local owners (51 percent).

Survey questions were derived from in-person interviews with the Hamilton City Planner, as well as a review of previous planning studies dealing with absentee ownership and land issues (notably Cockerham and Blevins 1977). The survey's primary goal was to measure the differences in support for downtown revitalization among the two ownership groups. Responses to a series of questions related to levels of support were measured on a Likert Scale (0-5), where 1 represented "very interested" and 5 represented "very disinterested". To test some of the survey results, statistical significance was determined through the use of chi-square. As generally accepted in studies reviewed for this thesis, "significance" occurs when the differences that exist in the

distribution of responses have a probability of less than five percent of occurring by chance (Cockerham and Blevins 1977). Descriptive statistics for all variables included in the questionnaire, as well as a synopsis of survey comments, appear in Chapter 3.

Mapping the Study Area

A cadastral map showing legally defined property ownership boundaries within the Hamilton downtown study area was obtained from county assessor's records. In January 1999, the cadastral map was digitized using CartoLinx, a digitizing software program. Four points (block corners) identified on the cadastral map were visited on-site to collect geographic control points through the use of digital instruments using global positioning systems (GPS) technology. The geographic coordinates were used to geo-reference the cadastral map on the digitizing tablet to the computer-generated map image on the workstation screen. The computer-generated map images presented in this thesis showing parcel ownership and land use in the Hamilton study area were arranged and designed using ArcView GIS software.

Huxhold (1991) defines GIS as a computerized database management system used to collect, store, analyze and portray spatial data. In the most basic terms, GIS is a data model consisting of two main parts: *spatial entities*, which are computer representations of features such as a land parcel; and descriptive data about the parcel, commonly re-

ferred to as *attributes* (Huxhold 1991). Throughout most of the decade, implementation of GIS technology has been most prevalent in larger municipal governments wanting to bring order to the physical, social and economic variables that impact its jurisdiction (Huxhold 1991). It has not been until recently that non-metropolitan municipalities have taken advantage of GIS capabilities to analyze complex relationships among spatial variables (Stokes, Watson and Mastran 1989; Donley 1997).

Examples of GIS applications that might benefit smaller communities include: (1) identifying property owner addresses for public notice mailings, (2) determining the appropriate fees for water and sewer usage, (3) identifying where traffic lights and street signs have been installed, and (4) determining assessed property valuations for certain street-specific projects. In all these examples, information previously stored in file cabinets and map drawers were integrated into a GIS data management system set up to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local government services (Wilson 1994). As hardware and software costs become increasingly affordable, GIS will undoubtedly become more and more prevalent in small town planning offices in the 21st Century.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are difficulties encountered in urban renewal in the CBD that sometimes slow down the process. Among them are divided ownership and absentee ownership of sites.

Raymond E. Murphy, *The Central Business District*

This chapter reviews the interaction of land use geography and community sociology to better understand the "difficulties encountered in urban renewal" when absentee landowners control a sizable portion of the downtown land base in Hamilton, Montana. The following review of the literature examines the important social, economic, and spatial determinants of land use and development at the community level. How these determinants differ between local and absentee landholders in the context of downtown revitalization is a recurring theme throughout.

Land Tenure and the Urban Land Market

Community planning researchers and practitioners have recognized for years the importance of private land tenure in shaping the direction and nature of a town's morphological development (Adams and May 1991). In general terms, land tenure refers to how a piece of property is owned and con-

trolled. In this research, the distinction between those parcels under local ownership and those under absentee ownership are of most interest.

Private Land Ownership

Private land is owned and controlled by an individual or an organization of individuals such as spouses, partnerships, businesses or corporations. In legal terms, private land ownership represents a bundle of rights and duties held by a person or persons who control the legally recognized interest in a specific real property (Platt 1996). Real property in an urban setting typically includes the physical piece of land, as well as the improvements on that land such as buildings, parking lots, landscaping, etc.

Typically, downtown parcels are acquired through purchase, gift, or inheritance. Once acquired, a private landowner enjoys certain rights to make "profitable or pleasurable use" of his or her holdings (Platt 1996, 95). To enjoy those rights, a landowner also has certain duties to fulfill, including the duty to pay property taxes, to refrain from creating a nuisance (or harmful externalities), and to conform to public laws such as zoning and building codes (Platt 1996).

Absentee Land Ownership

In his book *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times* (1923), Thorstein Veblen defined absentee

ownership as "ownership of means in excess of what the owner can make use of, personally and without help" (Veblen 1923, 12). This definition has been refined and reinterpreted in subsequent literature to suggest that an absentee owner's "excess", such as land, is a resource for additional income (Fisher 1988). The primary means to derive income from this resource is to either: (1) rent the land for others to use; (2) hire others to make use of the land for profit; or (3) hold the land idle until it is "ripe" for future development or profitable disposal. Thus in basic terms, an absentee landowner typically derives income from his or her excess land holdings through rent, profit or capital (Fisher 1988).

Urban Land Market Theory

To a land economist, a community's land use pattern is the result of private landowners making "rational" decisions that maximize profits from their resource, whether they are local landowners making "profitable or pleasurable use" of their land, or absentee landowners deriving their income from rent, profit or capital.

The theory of the urban land market deals with the allocation of land uses in terms of "land rent" and the competitive bidding process (Alonso 1960). Urban land is considered to have value, or high "land rent", because of demand given to its site and situation (Chapin, Jr. 1965; Berry and Horton 1970). Berry and Horton (1970) describe land value as a function of the location of a parcel within

a city and the amenity value accorded to that site. Under this theory, a parcel of land located near the center of town (in the CBD) is considered to have the most potential for future income because it is situated in the most accessible and convenient place in the community. These centrally located parcels are typically occupied by commercial establishments, which need sites with maximized accessibility in order to make enough profit to pay higher land rents. If a business can no longer make enough profit from the current land use, a competitor will often purchase or rent the land and convert its function to a "higher and better use."

Through this process of bidding and selling, the urban land market establishes the general land use pattern in a community, "plot by plot, parcel by parcel" (Ratcliff 1949, 289). Thus to an economist, it is the urban land market that determines the utilization of each parcel, the extent and nature of improvements on that parcel, and the point in time when a vacant parcel is brought into use (Ratcliff 1949). As Richard Ratcliff summarized in his book *Urban Land Economics*, a community's land use pattern is most often determined "through the dollar evaluation of the importance of convenience" (1949, 375).

While the urban land market theory is important in determining the location and arrangement of land use in a community, it does not alone explain differences in the type or intensity of utilization, particularly between local and absentee landowners. These differences in landowner behavior

can be better understood by reviewing the "socially rooted" or personal determinants of land use and development.

Landowner Behavior and Land Development

In recent years, urban sociologists have looked beyond the economic determinants of land utilization and have recognized that personal determinants among private landowners are varied and, as a consequence, they do not always respond uniformly to a rational land allocation and development process (Adams and May 1991). One method social scientists use to measure personal determinants in the decision-making process is the behaviorist approach (Adams and May 1991).

Adams and May's (1991) research on land ownership and local development categorizes private landowners into two behavior typologies: *active* and *passive*. Active landowners are those who develop the land themselves, enter into joint-venture developments, or market their land for others to develop. In contrast, passive landowners tend to "sit" on their vacant land without development, or delay conversion plans that would intensify the use of their holdings (Adams and May 1991). Passive owners might delay costly improvements on their parcel in order to increase revenues if the land is sold in the future. This neglect often times contributes to the type of harmful externalities (such as weedy lots or derelict buildings) often bemoaned by neighboring landowners and businesses.

Empirical research using the behaviorist typology finds that private landowners are more likely to develop or intensify their holdings as they become more active in the local planning process. Passive landowners, on the other hand, avoid or delay development because they are unfamiliar with the local development process (Adams and May 1991).

A review of the literature found no research to indicate whether or not this active and passive typology could be used to explain differences in development between local and absentee landowners. However, this thesis argues that absentee landholders will exhibit a more passive behavior toward land development than local landholders because they have less familiarity and less involvement in the local planning process. This thesis further contends that an absentee landowner's passive behavior toward development will be manifested in the landscape. Parcels under absentee ownership are more likely to be vacant, under-utilized and unmanaged than parcels under local ownership.

Spatial Arrangement of Land Tenure

This thesis contends that the spatial arrangement of land tenure (or the cadastral pattern) will mirror the pattern of land use intensity in the Hamilton downtown study area. Therefore, an understanding of the internal arrangement of land use in a typical downtown setting is needed to better predict the arrangement of landholdings in Hamilton.

Community Ecology: the Central Business District

Urban geographers, social scientists and city planners have shown great interest in the distribution of municipal land use. Burgess (1925) developed one of the first models (referred to as the concentric zone model) for describing the basic pattern of land use in a city. The model, based in human ecological theory, consists of five concentric zones, or rings, beginning with the city center. They are: (1) Central Business District (CBD), (2) Zone in Transition, (3) Zone of Workingmen's Homes, (4) Residential Zone, and (5) Commuters' Zone. As communities grow, dominant land uses found in the inner rings tend to invade the next outer ring, in a sequence human ecologists refer to as "invasion and succession". Our primary concern here is with the general characteristics found in the two innermost rings. Burgess described the CBD as the heart of the downtown market, a place where retail, office, financial and entertainment functions intermingle. Conterminous to, and surrounding the CBD is the "zone in transition", which consists of a variety of less intensive land uses, older structures and apartment buildings (Burgess 1925; Chapin Jr. 1965).

In subsequent research, Preston (1966) described Burgess's zone in transition as an area "typified by mixed land use, aging structures, general instability, and change, and by a wide range in type and quality of functions" (1966, 236). Preston revealed how the zone in transition is a challenge to city planners, as it "possesses neither the loca-

tional advantages of a [CBD] nor conditions which are readily adaptable to a widely desirable pattern of residential living. Consequently, the transition zone lies neglected by both public and private enterprise" (1966, 236).

Similar to Burgess's two inner rings, this thesis uses the CBD core-frame concept developed by Horwood and Boyce (1959). The authors identify the highly concentrated central area as the CBD core and its bordering area the CBD frame. The CBD core is a place with the greatest concentration of social and economic activities characterized by offices, retail outlets, restaurants, consumer services, hotels, banks and theaters (Horwood and Boyce 1959). The CBD frame is characterized by less intensive land uses, such as off-street parking areas, automobile sales and service establishments, multi-family dwellings, aging structures and light manufacturing sites (Horwood and Boyce 1959; Murphy 1972).

A review of the literature found no empirical research that applied the core-frame concept to a small urban setting like Hamilton. As stated in Chapter 1, any effort to delimit the core and frame is highly subjective. However, this thesis contends that land uses found in the twelve-block area encompassing Main Street exhibit similar characteristics of the CBD core. Land uses found in the nine-block zone surrounding the core district exhibit similar characteristics of the CBD frame.

Land Use Intensity and Land Tenure

The core-frame concept is used as a framework to examine the spatial distribution of absentee-owned land in the Hamilton study area. As alluded to in the urban land market theory, and documented in subsequent research, the value of land increases in relation to proximity to the central core district (Chapin Jr. 1965; Murphy 1972). Land located near the center of town is most valuable because of its' accessible and convenient location. Consequently, the intensity of land use is much greater in the CBD core than in the CBD frame (Horwood and Boyce 1959; Griffin and Preston 1968).

This thesis assumes that local landowners (who are presumably more active) will develop their holdings more intensively than absentee landowners. It is contended that a local landowner's preference toward more intensive land development will be manifested in the landscape. Locally owned parcels will be located in the highly intensive CBD core, while absentee-owned parcels will be concentrated in the less intensive CBD frame. Therefore, it is hypothesized that absentee-owned land will be located in the CBD frame rather than randomly dispersed throughout the entire study area.

Land Tenure and Downtown Revitalization

A review of the literature offers three main explanations as to why absentee landowners might differ from local landowners in their support for downtown revitalization.

They are: (1) the "gangplank syndrome" theory, (2) the "growth machine" theory and (3) the "local dependency" theory.

The "Gangplank Syndrome" Theory

The recent population boom in rural parts of the Mountain West has led to considerable speculation as to whether newcomers view growth and preservation issues differently than permanent residents. Previous research, much of it from the Rocky Mountain West, has shown that newcomers are more likely to oppose local growth and development strategies, but support local preservation plans, in an effort to preserve the rural amenities that attracted them in the first place — the so-called "gangplank syndrome". However, more recent studies suggest that these generalizations should not be universally applied to every newcomer in every community.

Spectorsky presented the first landmark study on "newcomers versus old-timers" with the publication of his book, *The Exurbanite*, in 1955. In the book, the author coined the term "exurbanites" for those urban residents who, wanting to escape the city life, moved out to the metropolitan fringe to enjoy the environmental amenities and slower life-style found in the rural countryside. As more and more "exurbanites" migrated into these rural areas, Spectorsky found that the amenities of the rural countryside began to erode. This erosion caused many newcomers to favor tighter growth man-

agement restrictions than old-timers in order to protect their new-found seclusion.

Graber (1974) expanded on Sectorsky's thesis by studying the role of exurbanites in an historic preservation plan for a small Colorado community. Graber's often-cited research confirmed Sectorsky's "gangplank syndrome" theory. His study found that exurbanites fleeing Denver to the small town of Georgetown, Colorado, tended to support historic preservation programs more than local residents, presumably in an effort to preserve the town's unique character that attracted them in the first place (Graber 1974). Typical of many newcomers, an informant told Graber, "everyone wants to be the last person to move into Georgetown. They want to close the gate after they are in" (Graber 1974, 510). Graber's research revealed a much higher level of support among newcomers than old-timers for a Historic Preservation Ordinance that would "attain a degree of stabilization and control over changes that might occur to this rural community" (Graber 1974, 512). It is important to note that Graber's findings were based on interviews with community residents and community leaders, and may not have reflected opinions among those newcomers or old-timers who owned commercial land in Georgetown and therefore, may or may not have economically benefited from town preservation.

Cockerham and Blevins', Jr. (1977) survey of private landowners in the rapidly expanding Jackson Hole area of northwestern Wyoming found that newer landowners generally

supported government control of land use while older landholders favored control by the individual owner. New landowners (newcomers) supported local government regulations in order to protect natural resources and to control land development. This study was the first to suggest that the "gangplank syndrome" might be applicable to newcomers and old-timers who owned private land in a community. But this study did not deal specifically with absentee land ownership. Nor did it deal with commercial land ownership in a downtown setting.

Voss (1980) tested the underlying assumptions of the "gangplank syndrome" by examining differences in attitudes toward growth between newcomers and old-timers in rural areas located well beyond the metropolitan fringe. In contrast to earlier studies, Voss found no significant difference between the two groups in their attitudes toward continued growth. Voss's study (conducted by means of telephone interviews with residents in non-metropolitan counties in the northern parts of Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin from 1970 to 1977) found that a vast majority of both resident groups supported local growth and development.

These findings suggest that: (1) the "gangplank syndrome" is influenced by the friction of distance from metropolitan areas; and (2) the "gangplank syndrome" is not applicable for every community, especially those places where the attraction of new residents and businesses is part of a local economic development strategy (Voss 1980).

Similar research conducted in southwestern Montana seems to validate Voss's findings. In the Gallatin Valley region, far removed from any major metropolitan area, Jobes (1995) found that both newcomers and old-timers alike welcomed growth, but opposed land use planning and controls. Jobes' case study found that newcomers to this high-amenity area typically supported growth because they lacked an historical perspective on local changes, and felt a "little more" development was probably acceptable. Old-timers seemed to support local growth and development because of the perceived economic benefits tied to community expansion (Jobes 1995).

Results from these studies testing the "gangplank syndrome" theory offer important considerations for this research. First, it appears that the "gangplank syndrome" is more prevalent in outlying "bedroom communities" near large metropolitan areas, where newcomers oppose population growth in an effort to preserve the "small town charm" that attracted them in the first place. In rural communities far removed from metropolitan areas, studies find that both newcomers and old-timers alike support growth and development, recognizing that community expansion is an important part of a local economic development strategy. Notably, none of the studies cited in this review dealt specifically with "absentee versus local land ownership". Thus, there is no conclusive evidence to indicate that the same attitudes that define newcomers could also be attributed to absentee landown-

ers, even though both share inherently similar characteristics. Finally, none of the studies dealt specifically with commercial landowners and their attitudes toward downtown improvement projects. Therefore, from a review of the "gangplank syndrome" literature, it does not appear that this theory alone can explain possible differences between local and absentee landholders in their support for downtown revitalization.

Growth Machine Theory

Molotch (1976) advanced "the city as growth machine" theory by examining the influence of land-based elites on local development policies and land-use planning decisions. Sociologists define land-based elites as those who derive most of their income from property holdings. Under this growth machine theory, Molotch views land as a "market commodity providing wealth and power" (1976, 309). Molotch argues that "any given parcel of land represents an interest and that any given locality is thus an aggregate of land-based interests" (1976, 310). In order to enhance those interests, land-based elites, such as local businesses, banks, utilities and real estate developers, etc., become active promoters of growth and development because they benefit from the increasing intensification of land use in their community.

Recent studies evaluating the growth machine concept indicate that the theory is most useful in understanding

conflicts between homeowners and landowners, particularly over growth and land use issues (Flora et al. 1992; Logan, Whaley and Crowder 1997). This conflict usually boils down to differences in "use value" and "exchange value". Local residents, primarily homeowners, are more interested in the use value of land, or the value of land without selling it. Commercial landowners, especially land-based elites, are more interested in exchange value, or the value realized only after their land is sold (Flora et al. 1992). In the case of urban renewal, use value and exchange value come into direct conflict. Neighborhood homeowners not only embrace use value, but also have a vested interest in keeping the value of their property low (meaning lower property taxes). In contrast, neighborhood business owners and landowners profit from increasing values of land, and thus embrace urban renewal to increase the exchange value of their land (Flora et al. 1992).

The impact of absentee ownership on the growth machine theory was examined in the book, *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change* (Flora et al. 1992). In the book, the authors contend that communities with increasing numbers of absentee land and business owners could result in a "insiders versus outsiders" mentality among local residents. Absentee firms and absentee landowners are geographically mobile, and therefore "generally invest neither their personal capital nor their energy in community affairs" (Flora et al. 1992, 266). Local firms, on the other hand, are geographically

immobile and might align with the growth machine in order to benefit both economically and symbolically (Flora et al. 1992).

This evaluation of the growth machine theory seems to suggest that local landowners would show higher levels of support for downtown revitalization than absentee landowners in an effort to attract more economic growth and development in the community. But due to a lack of empirical research examining the influence of a small community's growth machine on downtown revitalization efforts, it is not appropriate to base a hypothesis on this theory alone. Therefore, a third explanation, with sociological concepts closely resembling growth machine theory, is used for this thesis.

The Local Dependency Theory

The theory of local dependency suggests that the differences between local and absentee landowners in their support for downtown revitalization might be contingent upon each group's dependency, or reliance, on the community for their social and economic livelihood (Cox and Mair 1988). Local dependency theory contends that businesses with "geographically limited" investments in the built environment are more dependent on the health of a particular local economy than businesses having "geographically mobile" investments (Cox and Mair 1988, 308). Because these geographically limited investments "are only amortized over long periods of time" (Cox and Mair 1988, 308), the theory suggests that

local firms are more likely to support plans that attract and sustain economic development in order to increase the exchange value of their land. Local dependency theory seems to imply that local landowners — who presumably have larger spatially immobile investments in the community than absentee landowners — would be much more interested in protecting those investments and support downtown revitalization.

Local dependency may also result from the need for local social relationships and exchange linkages. The authors state: "The development of predictability, trust, brand loyalties, and unique local knowledge all encourage stable relations with particular customers and suppliers in particular places" (Cox and Mair 1988, 308-309). The need for local exchange linkages seems to imply that local firms, who rely on stable relations with customers in particular places more than non-local firms, are more likely to support local economic development plans.

In rural communities where a number of businesses and landowners are dependent on the same locality, there are often collective attempts to form "local business coalitions" (Cox and Mair 1988). Public utility companies, local banks, and local newspapers are all cited as examples of firms that are locally dependent. Local business coalitions seek to encourage local economic growth, often by promoting infrastructure improvements such as downtown revitalization (Cox and Mair 1988).

Two recent studies, one dealing directly with local dependency and the other indirectly, offer important findings for this thesis. Johnson and Rasker's (1993) investigation into whether there were significant differences in business location and retention factors among firms in three rural Montana counties bordering Yellowstone National Park, found that, indirectly, local dependency was an underlying determinant. To test the assertion that business location decisions are based not only on traditional economic reasons, but also on environmental amenities and quality-of-life considerations, the study used the "newcomers versus old-timers" typology to survey older businesses and recent arrivals. Among the findings, the study reports that old-timer business owners place a higher degree of importance on "proximity to clientele" as a location factor than newer business owners (Johnson and Rasker 1993).

According to the authors, these findings suggest that old-timer businesses are more closely tied to the local economy than newer, footloose, businesses: "Old-timer businesses may depend to a greater extent on return clientele and a long time personal business relationship with the community" (Johnson and Rasker 1993, 17). The study's findings suggest that businesses owned by long-term residents have a stronger dependency on the locality than businesses owned by newer persons.

Green et al. (1996) examined attitudes toward land use controls and local economic development among seasonal and

permanent residents in a northern Wisconsin community. Most of the seasonal residents owned second or recreational homes on lakeshore property. From survey data, the study found that permanent residents are much more supportive of local economic development activities than seasonal residents (Green et al. 1996). These findings support Cox and Mair's local dependency thesis. The study contends that "as permanent residents form social ties to their community, they develop a shared interest in growth and development. Seasonal residents may never become integrated into the larger community and thus would fail to develop this shared interest because they are less dependent on the local community for the social and economic life" (Green et al. 1996, 442). Like seasonal residents, this thesis assumes that absentee landowners lack a shared interest in local growth, development or revitalization issues because they too are less dependent on the local community for the social and economic life.

Local dependency theory provides the best explanation for the presumed differences between local and absentee landowners in their support for downtown revitalization in Hamilton. Local landholders are assumed to have larger fixed investments in the community than absentee landowners. Therefore, their fortunes are more directly tied to the future of Hamilton. Absentee landowners, on the other hand, tend to have less economic or social ties to the Hamilton community. Therefore, it is hypothesized that absentee land-

owners will be significantly less supportive of downtown revitalization than local landowners because they are not dependent on the Hamilton community for their social and economic livelihood.

Downtown Planning

Downtown revitalization involves a comprehensive planning strategy combining both the public and private sector. Studies have shown that support of private property owners and businesses is essential to downtown planning (Sedway and Cook 1983; Keating and Krumholz 1991). The interest and cooperation among landowners is especially critical in the formation of a Business Improvement District, given its limited geographic area (So and Getzels 1988; Porter 1997).

Planners play an important role in mobilizing landowner support. Community planning offers as organized approach to the land use decision-making process in light of spatial, social and economic considerations. As stated in many planning texts and guidebooks (Sedway and Cook 1983; So and Getzels 1988), downtown planning should involve four basic steps. These steps are:

- (1) Setting goals and objectives and defining a geographical boundary to carry out those goals

- (2) Collect and inventory all appropriate data (land use and supply, traffic circulation, parking availability, urban design. etc.)
- (3) Formulate possible options and alternatives to carry out goals
- (4) Implement the plan.

Given the cooperative nature of downtown revitalization, research has revealed how divided ownership or absentee ownership of parcels can sometimes adversely effect the planning process (Ratcliff 1949; Murphy 1972). The physical distance separating absentee landowners from local landowners makes it difficult to meet face-to-face and reach common goals and objectives (Ratcliff 1949). The perceived mobility of absentee ownership is often viewed among locals as an obstacle in defining long-term solutions to community problems (Flora et al. 1992).

In growing communities like Hamilton where a segment of the downtown land base is controlled by absentee landholders, it is crucial for planners to better understand how the goals and objectives of an absentee landowner might differ from those of a local landowner. This study seeks to enhance that understanding by testing a set of hypothesis formulated from this literature review.

Hypotheses

On the basis of the literature review and assumptions derived from previous research, the following four hypotheses have been developed:

Hypothesis #1: Absentee-owned parcels are significantly more likely to be vacant or under-developed than locally owned parcels

Hypothesis #2: Absentee-owned parcels are likely to be less maintained than locally owned parcels

Hypothesis #3: Absentee-owned land parcels will predominantly concentrate in the CBD frame (periphery) rather than randomly dispersed throughout the entire downtown study area.

Hypothesis #4: Local landowners will exhibit significantly higher levels of support for downtown revitalization than absentee landowners.

CHAPTER III
DATA ANALYSIS

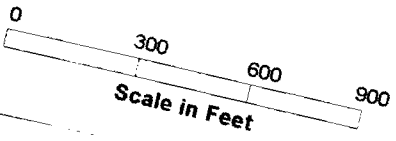
Field data were collected in Hamilton, Montana, during the fall of 1998. The Hamilton downtown study area was delimited by observing the break in continuity between traditional CBD land uses (commercial, wholesale, industrial) and surrounding tracts of homogeneous land uses not typically associated with the downtown business district. The study area was further divided into the concentrated CBD core and the transitional CBD frame. The CBD core represents highly intensive commercial land uses, while the CBD frame is typified by less intensive land uses, deteriorating structures, and vacant lots. Figure 4 (page 20) shows the inner twelve-block zone centered along Main Street representing the downtown core, and the surrounding nine-block area representing the downtown frame.

The Hamilton downtown study area consists of 21 blocks and 456 parcels, comprising about 40 acres (1,740,000 square feet) of developable land parcels. Of the developable land, 1,427,250 square feet (82 percent) are privately owned and 312,750 square feet (18 percent) are held under public ownership (Figure 5).

Hamilton Downtown Study Area



U.S. Highway 93



- Private Land
- Public/Org. Land

Bradley F. Davis

Figure 5: Distribution of privately-owned parcels

Downtown Land Tenure

Table 1 shows the proportion of land tenure types in the downtown study area. Of the 127 private landowners in the study area, 99 (78 percent) are local and 28 (22 percent) are absentee as previously defined.

Table 1. Private downtown land tenure (1998)

Private	Local	(%)	Absentee	(%)
Landowners	99	78.0	28	22.0
Parcels	281	75.3	91	24.7
Area (sq. ft.)	1,074,050	75.3	353,200	24.7

Of the 372 privately owned parcels, 281 parcels (75.3 percent) are controlled by local landholders while 91 parcels (24.7 percent) are controlled by absentee landholders. Of the 1,427,250 square feet of privately owned land in the study area, locals control 75.3 percent while absentee landowners control 24.7 percent. Table 1 illustrates — using number of private landowners, number of privately owned parcels, and area of privately owned land as proportioned quantities — that absentee landholders control approximately one quarter of the downtown land base in Hamilton.

Table 2 shows where each of the 28 absentee landowners maintain their permanent residence according to 1997 property tax billing addresses. Ten absentee landowners reside

Table 2. Place of permanent residence: Absentee landowners

<u>In-State (16)</u>		<u>Out-of-state (12)</u>				
Ravalli*	Montana	CA	CO	UT	IA	NC
10	6	7	2	1	1	1

* Includes all communities in Ravalli County (Stevensville, Victor, Corvallis, Darby, Sula, and Florence).

in Ravalli County, but outside the Hamilton postal zip code area. Six landowners reside elsewhere in Montana, but outside Ravalli County. As for the twelve out-of-state landowners, most reside in California (7), followed by Colorado (2), Utah (1), Iowa (1), and North Carolina (1).

Downtown Land Use

Table 3 shows the percentage of land use activity in the Hamilton downtown study area according to seven aggregated classes. Typical of most downtown business districts, more than half of the land base (54 percent) is utilized for commercial retail and/or professional service uses. Residential land use makes up about 21 percent of the study area. Public land use, open space, and organizational land uses (e.g. county courthouse, city hall, park, library, municipal pool, fraternal organizations, churches) make up about 16 percent of the study area. Vacant land, parking space and wholesale/industrial land use each make up approximately 3 percent of the downtown study area.

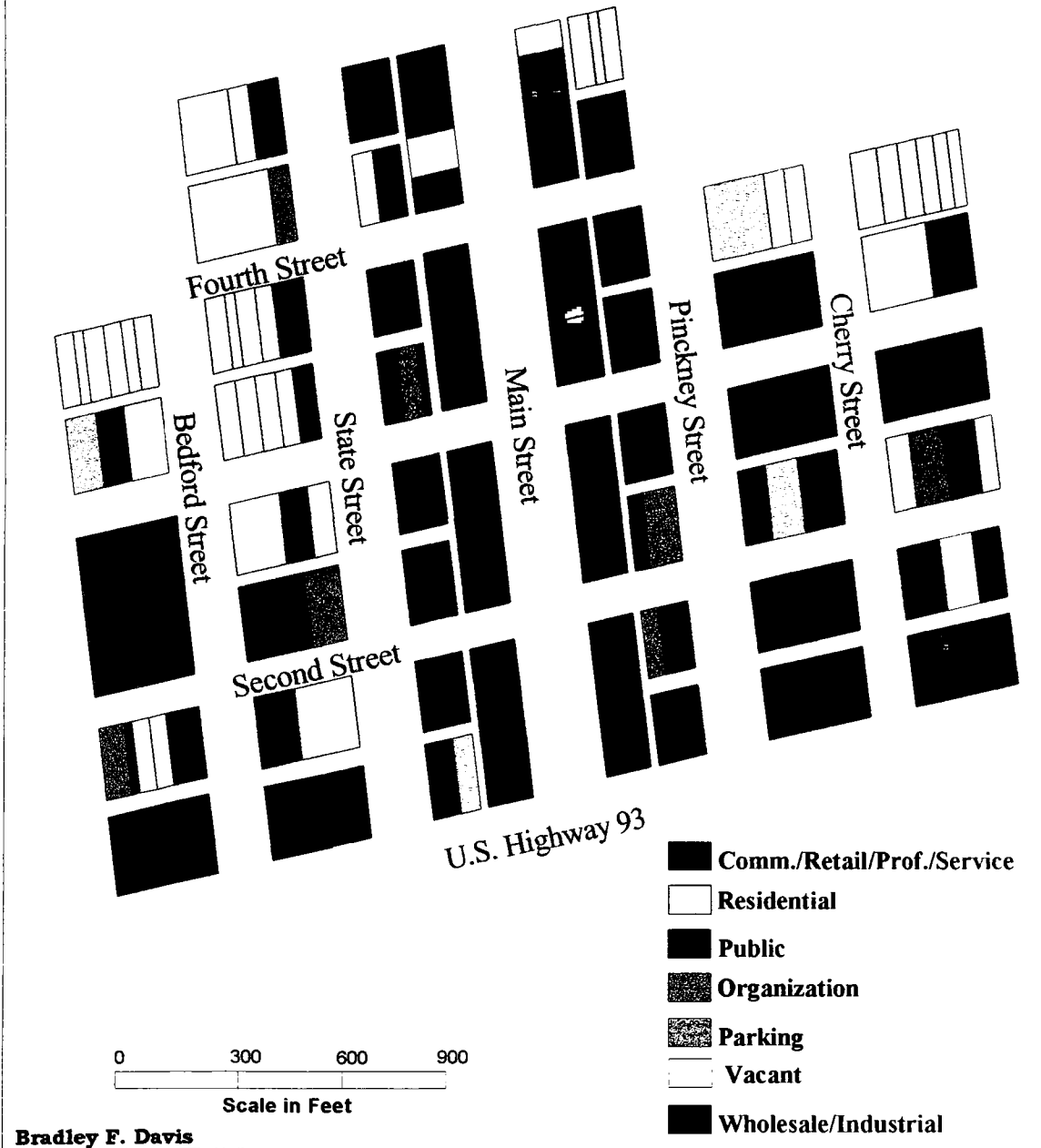
Table 3. Study area land use percentages (1998)

Land Use Categories	Area (sq. ft.)	(%)
Commercial/Retail	575,300	33.1
Professional/Service	363,700	20.9
Residential	345,300	19.8
Public/Organization	285,450	16.4
Parking	60,200	3.5
Vacant	57,350	3.3
Wholesale/Industrial	52,700	3.0

The land-use percentages observed in 1998 are similar to those recorded nearly twenty-five years ago in a survey of the Hamilton CBD conducted by private planning consultants (Morrison-Maierle, Inc. 1972). The 1972 survey inventoried a twenty-block rectangular zone encompassing most of the study area surveyed in 1998. Of the 1,694,000 square feet of developable land surveyed in 1972, nearly 41 percent was utilized for commercial and service functions, compared to 54 percent in 1998. Public and organizational land uses comprised about 13 percent of the CBD land base in 1972, compared to about 20 percent in 1998.

Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of the seven aggregated ground-floor land use classes within the downtown study area. All of the vacant parcels and parcels designated for wholesale and/or industrial use are located in the CBD frame. Most of the parcels designated for commercial retail and/or professional service land uses are located in the CBD core.

Hamilton Downtown Study Area



Bradley F. Davis

Figure 6: Distribution of ground-floor land use

Downtown Land Tenure and Land Use

Table 4 shows the utilization of the 372 privately owned parcels in the downtown study area categorized by land tenure group. Significant differences between local and absentee landowners on how they utilize their downtown parcels were measured using a chi-square statistic and two-by-two contingency tables.

Results from the survey indicate that parcels developed for industrial use are significantly more likely to be owned by absentee landholders than local landholders in the study area. There were no other significant differences in land use between the two tenure groups.

Table 4. Study area land tenure and land use (1998)

	Absentee Parcels (N=91)		Local Parcels (N=281)		Chi- Square
		(%)		(%)	
Commercial	55	60.4	196	69.8	.37
Residential	21	24.1	66	23.5	.00
Industrial	7	7.7	6	2.1	4.65*
Vacant	6	6.6	9	3.2	1.46
Parking	2	2.2	4	1.4	.00

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Commercial land development comprised the largest proportion of absentee-owned parcel use (60.4 percent) and locally owned parcel use (69.8 percent) in the study area. The percentage of absentee-owned parcels designated for residential use (24.1 percent) is comparable to locally owned parcels (23.5 percent). The percentage of vacant absentee-owned

parcels (6.6 percent) is slightly, but not significantly, higher than locally owned parcels (3.2 percent).

In addition to land use, the survey also recorded the condition of buildings and landscaping for each privately-owned parcel. This classification of visual elements (i.e. building structure, sidewalk maintenance, weed management) is highly subjective, and thus, the findings cannot be statistically measured. However, the findings reveal little difference between local and absentee landowners in the way they maintain their downtown holdings. Of the 91 parcels under absentee ownership, 82 (90.1 percent) were deemed "well kept", while 9 (9.9 percent) were deemed "moderate" or "unmanaged" as defined in this research (Chapter 1). In comparison, of the 281 parcels under local ownership, 264 (93.9 percent) were deemed "well kept", while 17 (6.1 percent) were deemed "moderate" or "unmanaged".

Downtown Land Tenure Distribution

Figure 7 shows the spatial distribution of the 91 absentee-owned parcels in the study area. It is hypothesized (Chapter 2) that absentee-owned parcels will be concentrated predominately in the study area's periphery (or CBD frame) rather than be dispersed throughout the entire study area. Under this hypothesis, the percentage of absentee-owned land area in the downtown frame should exceed the percentage of absentee-owned land area in the downtown core.



Bradley F. Davis

Figure 7: Distribution of absentee-owned parcels

To measure whether absentee-owned land is more concentrated in the downtown core or downtown frame area, the percentage of absentee-owned land area was calculated using total square footage (Table 5).

Table 5. Percent of absentee-owned land in core/frame areas

	Downtown Core	Downtown Frame
Total Land Area (sq. ft.)	990,000	750,000
Absentee-Owned Land Area (sq. ft.)	182,500	170,700
% Absentee-Owned	18.4	22.8

Table 5 shows that absentee landholders control about 18 percent of the land area in Hamilton's downtown core district and approximately 23 percent of the land area in the downtown frame area. Two large absentee-owned parcels in the downtown fringe are used for industrial use, which is typically found in a small town's transitional zone between high-intensive commercial land uses and less intensive, mixed land uses.

Absentee-owned parcels do not appear to be randomly dispersed throughout the entire study area. Rather, absen-

tee-owned parcels are concentrated predominately in the transitional downtown frame area.

Landowner Support for Downtown Revitalization

Data analyzed in this section were collected by means of a one-page questionnaire administered to private landowners in the downtown study area during the fall of 1998. Survey recipients were randomly selected from a sampling frame of 127 landowners whose names and addresses were obtained from county tax assessment records. From this list, local and absentee landowners were stratified from a sample size of 80 and randomly selected. Both local owners (n=62) and absentee owners (n=18) were asked to complete the same questionnaire.

Recipients were requested to complete the survey and mail it back to the author using a provided self-addressed, stamped envelope. The survey's primary objective was to measure significant differences in support for downtown revitalization between the two tenure groups. Statistical significance was determined through the use of a *t*-test based on results from two independent samples.

Survey response rates are shown in Table 6. The overall response rate was 61.2 percent, with a much higher response rate among absentee owners (94.4 percent) than local landowners (51.6 percent).

Table 6. Landowner survey response rates

	#Contacted	#Returned	%Returned
Total	80	49	61.2
Absentee Landowners	18	17	94.4
Local Landowners	62	32	51.6

Although not determined, the higher response rate from absentee landowners could be attributed to the small sample size whose characteristics tend to respond more favorably to survey questionnaires.

Ownership Characteristics

Respondents were initially asked some general questions regarding their parcel ownership. Of the 49 survey respondents, 44 (89.8 percent) purchased their downtown property, while 5 (10.2 percent) inherited their downtown property (Table 7). Broken down by tenure, absentee landowner respondents reported a slightly higher percentage (11.8) of acquisition through inheritance than local landholders (9.4).

Table 7. Land acquisition and ownership characteristics

	Absentee (%)	Local (%)	%Total*
Acquisition			
Purchase	15 88.2	29 90.6	89.8
Inheritance	2 11.8	3 9.4	10.2
Ownership			
Individual	9 52.9	13 40.6	44.9
Joint/Spousal	5 29.4	17 53.1	44.9
Company	3 17.6	2 6.3	10.2
Trustee	0 00.0	0 0.0	00.0

* Percentages are based on the total sample of survey respondents

Table 7 also shows the types of ownership arrangements prevalent in the study area. Of the 49 survey respondents, most reported individual ownership (44.9 percent) or joint partnership (44.9 percent) of their downtown holdings. Broken down by tenure, absentee respondents reported a slightly higher percentage (52.9) of individual ownership than local respondents (40.6). In contrast, local respondents reported a higher percentage of joint ownership (53.1) than absentee respondents (29.4).

Survey respondents were asked the primary reason for land ownership in the downtown study area (Table 8). Of the 49 respondents, 17 (34.7 percent) indicated that the primary reason was to maintain a place for occupation (or business), with a higher percentage among local respondents when broken down by tenure.

Table 8. Primary purpose for parcel ownership

	Absentee	(%)	Local	(%)	%Total*
Residence	1	5.9	7	21.9	16.3
Occupation	4	23.5	13	40.6	34.7
Investment	3	17.6	5	15.6	16.3
Rent/Lease	9	52.9	7	21.9	32.7

* Percentages are based on the total sample of survey respondents

Sixteen respondents (32.7 percent) indicated that the primary reason was for rent or lease, with a much higher percentage among absentee respondents when broken down by tenure. Not surprisingly, residential use was more prevalent

as a reason for ownership among local respondents (21.9 percent) than absentee respondents (5.9 percent).

Table 9 shows the average length of ownership in the study area by land tenure. On average, local respondents owned their parcels longer (19.3 years) than absentee respondents (15.8 years).

Table 9. Average length of parcel ownership

	Absentee	Local
Years	15.8	19.3

Downtown Improvement Needs

Respondents were asked to choose the most important improvements needed in the downtown study area from a list provided in the questionnaire (Table 10). Most respondents identified their top three choices. The frequencies of each variable were calculated and ranked for both tenure groups to measure any differences between the paired ranks using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Shaw and Wheeler 1994).

Of the 49 survey respondents, most listed "more parking facilities" as the most important improvement need in downtown Hamilton. Sidewalk repair/maintenance was identified as the second most frequent need. Storefront renovation and street repair tied for the third most frequent need identified by survey respondents.

Table 10. Identified improvement needs by land tenure

	<u>Absentee</u>		<u>Local</u>		<u>Total</u>
	freq.	rank	freq.	rank	(n=76)
Parking	10	1	15	1	32.9%
Sidewalks	5	2	14	2	25.0%
Storefronts	5	3	4	5	11.9%
Streets	3	4	6	3	11.8%
Benches/trees	2	5	4	4	7.9%
Utilities	2	6	4	5	7.9%
Signage	1	7	1	7	2.6%

Using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ($r=0.896$), where -1.0 indicates that the two tenure groups have completely different perceptions of improvement needs and $+1.0$ indicates perfect comparability, there appears to be no significant difference between local and absentee landowners in their desired improvements in the downtown study area.

Support for Downtown Revitalization

Table 11 shows respondent attitudes about downtown revitalization. Significant tests in the text and tables were derived using a t -test to examine whether population means are equal based on results observed in two independent samples from each land tenure group. All statistical tests were performed using SPSS software.

In general, both local and absentee respondents were interested in knowing what goes on in the Hamilton downtown area. When asked on a 1 to 5 scale where 1 was "Very Interested" and 5 was "Very Disinterested", local respondents

Table 11. Attitudes about downtown revitalization among local and absentee landowners^a

	Absentee	Local	t-value
	----- Mean -----		
How interested are you in knowing what goes on in Hamilton's downtown area?	1.65	1.97	-.99 N.S.
How interested are you in being included in a special assessment district in the downtown area to promote commercial events ?	4.12	3.40	1.74**
How interested are you in being included in a special assessment district in the downtown area to fund infrastructure improvements ?	3.65	3.06	1.28 N.S.

** p<.05

N.S. (Not Significant)

^a These items were coded on a Likert Scale ranging from 0 (very interested) to 5 (very disinterested). Thus, the lower mean score, the more interested the item was rated by respondents

were somewhat less interested (n=32, mean = 1.97) than absentee respondents (n=17, mean 1.65). On average, absentee respondents (n=17, mean 4.12) were significantly less interested (t=1.74, p>.05) in being included in a special assessment district (such as a BID) to promote commercial events than local respondents (n=32, mean 3.40). Absentee respondents (n=17, mean = 3.65) were also somewhat less interested than local respondents (n=32, mean = 3.06) in being included in a BID to fund infrastructure improvements.

Most survey respondents (71.4 percent) thought infrastructure improvements would maintain their property value

in the downtown area. Absentee respondents reported a somewhat higher affirmation rate (76.5 percent) than local respondents (68.8 percent).

Respondent Written Comments

Of the 49 survey respondents, 23 (65.3 percent) provided written comments. The percentage of absentee respondents providing written comments (47.0 percent) is comparable to the percentage of local respondents providing concluding comments (46.8 percent). The following is a listing of all written comments to the question: "Is there anything you would like to comment upon regarding Hamilton downtown revitalization efforts?" The answers are recorded verbatim, organized by land tenure group:

Local Respondents

1. "Keeping downtown viable as a retail center with locally-owned businesses that reflect the character of the area is vitally important if Hamilton is to escape becoming nothing more than a strip of gas stations and fast food joints along 93."

2. "We moved here almost six years ago believing we would live in a small Western town. Instead, real estate purchases by Californians has ruined the area. It made it impossible for people looking for a place to live to be able to afford anything. We do not want anything to change but to go back to the way it was 10 years ago."

3. "Spending money does not make people in business good merchants."

4. "I would be very supportive of efforts to revitalize Hamilton's downtown area even if I was not a property owner. I believe that it is essential for Hamilton to maintain its downtown area as the center of business and community life, or else the character of this community will be changed for the worse."

5. "Open later hours or at least Sundays. We go to Missoula on Sundays if we need anything. Most people work Monday-Friday."

6. "The city should do a better job on cleaning the streets of dust and snow. The merchants are paying for extra maintenance. It's really a job the city should do to enhance the downtown area. It is also poorly done and only after prodding. [As for a special assessment for downtown], streets and utilities are a part of the tax structure. An assessment would only release tax mills that the city would spend elsewhere. The merchants would be double taxed. Past and present day administrations follow this approach."

7. "The city [should] review its rules, regulations and policies and get back to basics instead of acting like a large metro city."

8. "I'm too far away from downtown to be influenced."

9. "If business owners and employees would park their cars elsewhere, we could relieve the parking problem some."

10. "The efforts for revitalization are years overdue and needs to be aggressively pursued."

11. "Leave it alone!!! These retired people cannot afford new sidewalks and curbs."

12. "The key to revitalization is to provide shoppers with a good quality, reasonably priced clothing store. There is no competition or comparative shopping against Ford's department store, and most of the women shoppers I know prefer to spend their day shopping at a variety of stores with similar merchandise so they can strategize and compare value. If these options are not available, they will go straight to Missoula."

13. "The ability to get along."

14. "The primary difficulty that I see is coordinating the state and local governments to address repair and underlying utilities. If this cannot be facilitated, then the other issues will be side-tracked as they have been for the past 15-20 years!"

15. "As this business is three blocks from downtown businesses and it has more than enough off-street parking, I feel any special assessment district that includes this property would only cost this business more money for something that I already have. Let the businesses in the area that need these improvements pay for them, not the ones that have adequate facilities."

Absentee Respondents

1. "Our property is actually on Hwy. 93. In 1985, we renovated our building to look old, so it will fit in with anything done on Main Street. Because of our renters the renovations on Main Street will not help us. However, if Main Street is fixed up, I think it will help the whole town."

2. "I feel the best decisions are made by the permanent residents. I do love Hamilton."

3. "My building and grounds are kept up to date and improved every year. Scrubs kept trimmed. Sidewalks improved. If something needs fixing I go ahead and fix. I think uptown should do the same. I am one block off Main."

4. "If and when our property becomes commercial, I would change my answers on [Questions] #8 and #9 to 2 and 2 (from 5 and 5). Until then, I don't feel our property should be included in an assessment district."

5. "Get with it and do it!"

6. "Need new traffic light north and south of Main Street on Hwy. 93 (Can't enter 93 from the businesses on west side)."

7. "Long overdue!"

8. "My residence is not downtown and not a business."

These comments highlight the different opinions land-owners have toward downtown revitalization in Hamilton. In general, local respondents indicated that maintaining a vibrant downtown district was important in preserving their community's overall sense of place. One local respondent echoed some of the same sentiments found in the "gangplank syndrome" literature. In commenting how "Californians" have raised real estate prices and "ruined the area", this newcomer wished Hamilton could "go back to the way it was 10 years ago."

As for absentee landowner respondents, they generally indicated support for downtown revitalization. One respondent suggested that any downtown planning decisions should be left to local residents. A few other respondents indicated an interest in downtown revitalization only after their downtown holdings converted from residential to commercial use.

The implications of these survey findings on Hamilton's downtown revitalization process will be discussed in further detail in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This research reveals some important findings concerning the role of absentee land ownership in the downtown revitalization process. Through surveys and fieldwork in Hamilton, Montana, this thesis tested some assumed behavioral differences between absentee and local landowners in the way they develop and manage their downtown parcels, as well as differences in their support for downtown revitalization. For planners, understanding the contrasts between these two tenure groups is instrumental in mobilizing support for downtown planning projects, especially in rapidly growing communities where ownership of the downtown land base is divided.

The Extent of Absentee Land Ownership

This research found that nearly a quarter of Hamilton's downtown land base is owned by absentee landholders. A majority of these absentee landholders reside in Montana, but outside the community of Hamilton as defined in this research. Of those absentee landowners who live outside Montana, most reside in California.

Due to a lack of historical land tenure data, this research was unable to determine whether the number of absentee landowners is increasing or decreasing in Hamilton's downtown area. This would undoubtedly be of some interest to local residents, landowners and land use planners. Questions should be asked about the implications of rising absentee land ownership in a small town's central business district. For example, what are the local political ramifications if absentee property owners become more active in local land use planning, property taxation, and servicing debates? How will absentee owners respond to increased property tax assessment proposals when they have no representation in the local government? Does increasing absentee ownership lead to the "insiders versus outsiders" confrontation as some researchers have suggested? To examine these and other questions, it is hoped that this thesis can provide a benchmark for future planning studies interested in the changes in absentee ownership over time and its impact on local land use policies, especially in the rapidly growing communities of Montana and the Rocky Mountain West.

The Behavior of Absentee Land Ownership

Findings from the landowner survey contradict some of the basic perceptions of absentee land ownership in a small community. According to the survey, a majority of absentee landholders (88 percent) in the study area purchased their

downtown parcels. The remainder (12 percent) inherited them. These findings challenge the perception that absentee landowners are mostly distant family members who acquired their property through an inheritance. Instead, it appears that absentee landowners in downtown Hamilton are just as proactive as local landowners in acquiring their downtown holdings.

Whether or not absentee landowners utilize and maintain their downtown parcels differently than local landowners was a primary question throughout this research. It was hypothesized that there are significant behavioral differences in land utilization between the two tenure groups. This assumption was based on sociological studies examining various personal determinants in the land use decision-making process. Comparisons of the two tenure groups in this case study, however, fail to reveal any significant differences in land utilization. Based on the total number of parcels owned by each group, the percentage of downtown parcels developed for commercial use and residential use are nearly identical for both tenure groups. Only those parcels developed for industrial use are significantly more likely to be owned by absentee landholders.

This research also found that downtown parcels sitting vacant or under-developed were just as likely to be owned by local landholders as absentee landholders. Furthermore, this research found little difference between the two tenure groups in the way they maintain their downtown parcels.

Through fieldwork based primarily on observation, this research found that parcels covered with overgrown grass and weeds, or occupied with crumbling buildings and buckled sidewalks, were just as likely to be owned by local landowners as absentee landowners. Again, these findings seem to contradict perceptions held by many Hamilton residents interviewed for this research. Absentee landowners appear to be just as active as local landowners in developing their downtown parcels. Furthermore, absentee landowners appear to be just as interested in preserving the visual attractiveness of the downtown district by maintaining their individual parcels.

In summary, based on a limited sample in the Hamilton community, there does not appear to be any significant behavioral differences toward land development and land management between the two land tenure groups. Absentee-owned parcels are not significantly more likely to be vacant or under-developed than locally owned parcels. Nor are absentee-owned parcels any more likely to be less maintained than locally owned parcels.

The Location of Absentee Land Ownership

It was hypothesized that absentee-owned parcels would be located predominately in the CBD frame rather than randomly dispersed throughout the entire study area. Through field surveys and mapping, this research found that absen-

tee-owned parcels are concentrated predominately in the downtown frame. However, a large portion of absentee-owned land is also located in the core. The study area's ownership pattern could be attributed to the fact that absentee landowners are just as active as local landowners in developing and maintaining their downtown holdings. Therefore, absentee landowners will undoubtedly adhere to the same market principles as locals and seek to maximize their land rent by acquiring property in the most accessible location.

Application of GIS Technology

One objective of this thesis was to apply geographic information systems (GIS) technology to demonstrate how a spatial data management system can be used to administer small-scale planning projects, such as downtown revitalization, in rural communities. For this thesis, a map of the study area and accompanying attribute database was created using ArcView software. The database created for this study includes descriptive data for each parcel, including: subdivision block number, parcel number, parcel ID number, landowners, owner address, tenure group, land area (in square feet), and dominant ground-floor land use. Although not all these data were used in this study, a copy of the complete database was given to the Hamilton planning office. Other attribute fields may be added in the future. These might include: zoning information, legal description, assessed prop-

erty value, land use variances, sewer rates, commercial floor space, etc.

This spatial data management system could be useful to the Hamilton planning office in a number of ways: (1) calculating property assessments for special improvement district administration; (2) identifying property ownership addresses for public notice mailings; (3) maintaining appropriate fees for water and sewer usage; and (4) monitoring land or building vacancy rates and other information for grant applications. It is recognized that these are only a few of the applications GIS technology can provide to small communities. This thesis contends that if small town planning agencies can adapt desktop GIS technology in incremental steps, it can better understand the costs and benefits of upgrading to more robust GIS projects in the future.

Support for Downtown Revitalization

To accomplish one of the primary objectives of this thesis, a survey was conducted to test whether there are significant differences between the two tenure groups in their support for downtown revitalization. Based on local dependency theory, it was hypothesized that absentee landholders would be significantly less supportive of downtown revitalization than local landholders because they are not dependent on the Hamilton community for their social and economic livelihood.

In general, results from the landowner survey tend to support Cox and Mair's (1988) local dependency thesis. While neither group indicated overwhelming support for downtown revitalization, the survey found that local landowners exhibited higher levels of support for downtown revitalization efforts (such as a formation of a BID) than absentee landowners.

According to survey findings, local landowners were significantly more interested than absentee landowners for a BID that would promote commercial events in downtown Hamilton. Local landowners were also more interested in a BID that would fund downtown infrastructure improvements. However, the overall lack of enthusiasm from both tenure groups seems to suggest that, while both indicate some interest in revitalizing the downtown area, neither group is eager to pay for it.

The degree to which this case study — with a limited sample size — is representative of the broader role of absentee land ownership in a rural community's downtown revitalization process cannot yet be evaluated. The scarcity of comparable case study research makes it impossible to determine how these findings fit into the larger landscape.

Within these limitations, however, this thesis has shown how both absentee and local landowners share similar behavioral traits toward downtown land development, as well as some similar attitudes toward downtown revitalization. From land use surveys, it appears that absentee landowners

have invested just as much immobile capital (i.e. commercial buildings, homes, industrial sites) in Hamilton's built environment as local landowners. Furthermore, it appears that absentee landowners are just as concerned as local landowners in maintaining the visual attractiveness of their downtown property. Therefore, absentee land ownership does not appear to be a constraint upon which impedes future downtown revitalization efforts in the Hamilton community.

Even though absentee landowners tend to exhibit lower levels of support for downtown revitalization than local landowners, absentee respondents indicated stronger support for a BID that invests in physical infrastructure improvements rather than a BID that only promotes commercial events. Specifically, this research found that both tenure groups agree that additional parking space is the most important improvement needed in the Hamilton downtown area. Parking appears to be a unifying issue that might energize support among both tenure groups. Any project that successfully addresses this parking shortage could mobilize long-term support among both local and absentee landowners, who will recognize that by working together they can make downtown Hamilton a better place to do business, and the entire community a better place to live.

APPENDIX

Hamilton, Montana
August 1998

Hamilton CBD Land Use Code

Primary Symbol - General Ground Floor Land Use

1. Residential 2. Commercial 3. Industrial 4. Public 5. Vacant 6. Parking 7. Organization

Secondary Symbol - Specific Ground Floor Land Use

1. Residential
a. Single-family unit
b. multi-family unit
c. mobile home parks
d. senior housing
e. other residential

2. Commercial
a. retail sales (clothing, variety, misc.)
b. restaurants/bars/theaters
c. services/offices/supplies
d. hotel/motel/lodging
e. mixed retail

3. Industrial
a. light industry
b. heavy industry
c. wholesale/storage
d. fuel storage

Third Symbol - General Condition of Building

A. Well Kept

B. Moderate

C. Unmanaged/Deteriorating

D. Vacant

Fourth Symbol - General Condition of Property/Landscaping

X. Well Kept

Y. Moderate

Z. Unmanaged



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October 1998

Dear Hamilton Property Owner,

As the local trade center for one of Montana's fastest growing counties, the City of Hamilton has experienced extensive commercial development in the 1990s, especially along Highway 93. In an effort to maintain a vibrant downtown area, a group of business owners, property owners, government officials and residents have recently begun considering different strategies to revitalize the city's Central Business District. Because these renewal projects require support from downtown property owners such as yourself, information is needed to assess how private landowners feel about downtown revitalization efforts. This information will provide Hamilton citizens and policy makers a framework to better evaluate any downtown renewal projects.

As part of my graduate work at the University of Montana, I have randomly selected you from a list of private property owners in the Hamilton downtown area. I am interested in what you and other landowners think about downtown revitalization efforts in general, as well as your concerns for the downtown's future. Please help by completing this **brief questionnaire**. Because the total number of downtown private property owners is relatively small, it is critical that I hear back from everyone asked to participate in order to accurately report my findings. Your response is therefore extremely important.

The answers you provide are **strictly confidential**. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. The information you provide will not be identified with you in any manner. Your responses, together with others, will be combined and used for statistical summaries only. These summaries will be provided to local leaders in your community. Therefore, your input will benefit any future downtown revitalization plans and could help shape your community's future.

Please complete all the questions in the questionnaire by circling the appropriate answer. When you have completed the questionnaire, please seal it and return in the postage-paid envelope provided. This survey is being conducted by a graduate student enrolled in The University of Montana's Rural, Town and Regional Planning program. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at (406) 327 - 0139.

Thank you for your help.

Brad Davis
Department of Geography
The University of Montana



I. Ownership Characteristics

1.) Where is your permanent residential address?

- 0 Within the Hamilton Zip Code Area (59840)
- 1 Within the County of Ravalli, but outside Hamilton Zip Code Area
- 2 Within the State of Montana, but outside Ravalli County
- 3 Outside the State of Montana

IF your permanent residential address is within the Hamilton Zip Code Area (59840), skip to Question #2

IF your permanent residential address is outside the Hamilton Zip Code Area (59840), approximately how often did you visit the Hamilton downtown area during the past year?

- 0 About every day
- 1 About once a week
- 2 About once a month
- 3 About once every couple of months
- 4 Not at all

2.) How did you acquire your downtown property holdings in Hamilton?

- 0 Purchase
- 1 Inheritance

3.) How would you characterize your downtown property ownership?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 0 Individual (sole owner) | 2 Company |
| 1 Joint owner | 3 Trustee/executor |

4.) What is the **main** purpose for your downtown land ownership?

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 0 Place of residence | 2 Investment | 4 Other: _____ |
| 1 Place of occupation | 3 Rent or Lease | |

5.) How long have you owned property in the Hamilton downtown area? _____ Years

MORE QUESTIONS ON BACK

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