111 1st Street Jersey City, NJ: The Life and Death of an Arts Community

David Goodwin

Follow this and additional works at: http://fordham.bepress.com/urban_studies_masters

Recommended Citation

111 1st Street, Jersey City, NJ:
The Life and Death of an Arts Community

David J. Goodwin

Master’s Thesis

Urban Studies

Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

Fordham University
### Table of Contents

1. Acknowledgements 3  
2. Abstract 4  
3. Introduction 5  
4. Review of the Literature 12  
5. Methodology 19  
6. Chapter 1: The Value of Art 23  
7. Chapter 2: Trouble Brewing: The Future No Longer So Bright 48  
9. Chapter 4: The Dying Day of a Dream 81  
10. Conclusion 109  
11. Appendix I: Figures, Photographs, Maps, and Assorted Images 124  
12. Appendix II: Interview Questions 130  
13. Bibliography 133
Acknowledgments

The germ of this thesis originated in a seminar class in the fall 2009 in the Lincoln Center campus of Fordham University. The journey from an idea to a finished work involved several years of research, reading, thinking, and writing. I would like to thank all those who assisted and indulged me along the way.

Several classmates, notably Patrick Verel and Sarah Benoit, provided me with an audience and models for dedication to craft and scholarship.

Dr. Berg, Dr. Cohen, Dr. Nerio, and Dr. Panetta challenged my thinking and allowed me to become a better student and scholar. I am especially grateful to Dr. Fisher who served as my second reader and to Dr. Wakeman for her wisdom, guidance, and generosity throughout the entire process.

I am indebted to my colleagues at the Fordham Law Library for reading the initial fragments of this project and for offering encouragement, inspiration, and friendship. Juan Fernandez and Herbert Mayner of the Document Delivery Department sought and found many obscure monographs and articles at my request.

The staff and librarians in the New Jersey Room of the Jersey City Free Public Library. Your dedication to the life of Jersey City allowed for this history and study to be written.

My friend Matt Smith who first introduced me to the joy, confusion, and madness of city life with road trips to Buffalo and Toronto during our college years.

Artists, activists, government officials, business owners, and concerned citizens who gave me their time and trust. To all the artists of 111 1st Street, I hope that you appreciate my telling of your amazing story.

Finally, my wife, Jessica Murphy, who suffered through my tiresome musings and obsessions. Without you, I could have never written the first word. You showed me how wonderful the world can be.
Abstract

For nearly twenty years, 111 1st Street, a former tobacco warehouse, stood as the vibrant center of the arts community in Jersey City, New Jersey. The owner of 111 1st Street evicted its resident artists in 2005 and demolished the building in 2007. Artists are often viewed as an integral component to the gentrification process. However, the case of 111 1st Street suggests a possible alteration to the typical, gradual process of gentrification and challenges the established scholarship on the relationship between artists and gentrification. This thesis will use interviews and original research to recreate the narrative and history of 111 1st Street, focusing on the events surrounding its demise and its ultimate destruction. Additionally, this thesis will utilize 111 1st Street to highlight any resulting gaps in current gentrification theory.
“It was a cobble stone side street with garages, post-Civil War architecture, and small warehouses that was now coming to life, as these industrial streets will, when pioneer artists scrub, clear out, and scrape the years from wide windows and let in the light.”¹

-Patti Smith

**Introduction**

For nearly twenty years from the late 1980s to 2005, a shifting cast of artists and artisans worked and lived at 111 1st Street, a former tobacco warehouse, in Jersey City, New Jersey, building a vibrant and eclectic community and injecting energy into a wasteland of largely abandoned warehouses and silent factories. Artists from around the United States and, to a lesser degree, the world gravitated towards this building, and its residents believed that 111 1st Street and ultimately Jersey City would develop into a creative center existing alongside Manhattan on the opposite side of the Hudson River. At the time, this dream appeared to be possible, even probable. The gathering of artists at 111 1st Street and Jersey City paralleled the “discovery” of the Williamsburg neighborhood in the borough of Brooklyn by artists and like-minded creative types and professionals. The forces of gentrification beset both areas and reshaped their landscapes during the last several decades. However, the burgeoning artistic communities in Jersey City and Brooklyn reached far different conclusions. Today, several Brooklyn neighborhoods (Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and recently Bushwick) carry reputations as artistic

hubs and attract aspiring bohemians and curious visitors to their sites and streets. 111 1st Street experienced a different fate: it was obliterated. Today, a massive block-sized lot strewn with rubble and debris sits at the address of this once bustling, fecund community. No sign, no plaque, nothing commemorates its presence (See: Figure 4 and Figure 5). Why? What happened to 111 1st Street and its artists?

Before its life as an arts community and later as a setting for conflict and displacement, 111 1st Street operated as a tobacco warehouse and factory for the majority of its long existence. The building was constructed in 1866 for the American Screw Company in the Greek Revival style of architecture. The original structure was a four-story timber and brick frame facing the Hudson River. In 1874, the P. Lorillard Tobacco Company acquired the property and built additions, following the same architectural style. In the inner courtyard of the property, a five-story structure and a one-hundred-eighty-foot chimney were built. Ultimately, the property would consist of six connected buildings and four courtyards (See: Figure 1). Lorillard manufactured cigarettes, cigars, snuff, and pipe tobacco on the site, and 111 1st Street would serve as a factory and warehouse until 1956. The signage reading P. Lorillard Company remained visible on the 1st Street side of the warehouse until its razing (See: Figure 2 and Figure 3).2

The P. Lorillard Tobacco Company figured prominently in the industrial and political history of Jersey City. By the end of the nineteen century, Lorillard was the largest manufacturer of tobacco products in the United States.3 Noting the centennial of Hudson County in 1940, a

---

local newspaper article claimed that “[n]o industry has been more completely identified with Jersey City throughout the years than Lorillards.”

The centennial also “furnishe[d] the occasion for paying tribute to this family which has done so much in an industrial way to put Jersey City on the map.” Another publication cited Lorillard as “the leading industry in Jersey City” and that it did “more to advertise Jersey City in the markets of the world than any other manufacturing industry.”

A future mayor of Jersey City, Charles Sielder (mayoralty, 1876-1878), was a partner at Lorillard. Dr. Leonard Gordon, a civil war veteran and a prominent civic leader in Jersey City, who founded the public library and had a neighborhood park named in his honor, worked as the chief chemist and physician for Lorillard.

The destruction of a building central to the industrial and economic development of Jersey City and associated with important local figures calls into question the position of history in the ever-changing identity of Jersey City and the values of the city’s elites. The shattering of a vibrant and large community of artists may have been foreseen and ultimately inevitable as gentrification gathered force in the area; however, the chosen demolition of 111 1st Street, a building rich with history, reveals a rather crass and sad pursuit of short-term economic gains at the expense of long-term aesthetic, cultural, and civic good.

Entering the second decade of the twenty-first century, policy makers, scholars, activists, and citizens continue to debate the contours and the effects of gentrification. Gentrification, in one form or another, is a reality facing many municipalities and regions throughout the United States and North America. Artists stand as a particular community often impacted and displaced

---

4 “Lorillard Company Over 180 Years Old,” *Jersey City Observer*, May 18, 1940.
6 Publication information unknown, photocopy found in Business & Industry vertical file, Jersey City Free Public Library.
by gentrification. However, the specific relationship between gentrification and the creative class, especially artists, is far more complex than a simple pattern of displacement. Artists themselves play a role—an often integral and essential one—in the gentrification process and they hold a unique position in gentrifying and gentrified areas. Past gentrification followed a seemingly set pattern: an area gradually shifted from disinvestment to large-scale capital investment. In the case of 111 1st Street, several stages or waves appear to have been skipped when the gentrification process leapfrogged from near total disinvestment to rapid revalorization. This disruption can be witnessed in the effects of gentrification upon the artists of the building. Ultimately, the case of 111 1st Street questions whether the historical process of gentrification may have been interrupted—-if not completely altered—in the more affluent global cities.

This thesis will study the gentrification of Jersey City, New Jersey, and specifically the gentrification forces that shaped and ultimately destroyed the arts community at 111 1st Street. Located in a former industrial corridor sandwiched between the redeveloped waterfront of Jersey City and the “rediscovered” historic downtown neighborhoods, the building housed an arts community for nearly twenty years. After much legal-wrangling in 2005, the property owner evicted the artists working or living in the warehouse and then demolished it in 2007. The owner obtained a zoning variance and released plans for high-rise luxury housing. However, the downturn of the national economy and the collapse of the housing market in 2008 altered such optimistic grand planning, resulting in the property standing vacant of the date of this writing.

Like other former industrial centers, Jersey City has viewed back-office work and real estate as the linchpins of its present and future economy. The recent economic downturn illustrates the danger of relying upon an economy solely based upon services and consumption. Furthermore, sitting directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan, Jersey City exists as a
satellite of New York City. Its identity and its economy are intertwined with that of New York City and the greater metropolitan region. Therefore, a city like Jersey City lacks the independent cultural, economic, social, and economic resources of larger cities and even smaller regional cities. How can Jersey City and similar peripheral municipalities cope with globalization, deindustrialization, and gentrification? Does Jersey City possess any truly viable alternatives?¹⁸

Beyond a handful of articles in local publications, little has been written about the extinct and somewhat mythical building of 111 1ˢᵗ Street.⁹ When scholars, authors, and journalists explore the life of artists and their relationships with localities, they often detail storied and romantic settings, such as London, Paris, and New York. New Jersey---with its own rather undervalued history of arts and literature---does not stand high in the popular imagination as a cauldron of creativity.¹⁰ In the public imagination, New Jersey is ridiculed as a landscape of shopping malls, multi-lane highways, and insatiable suburban sprawl. Culture, history, and art do not belong to New Jersey, and they certainly do not belong to Jersey City.

Likewise, scholars of gentrification have produced a rich, varied, and somewhat combative body of literature exploring gentrification forces and processes.¹¹ Unfortunately, this literature

---

¹⁸ This might prove to be too complicated and too lengthy of a discussion to properly address in the research and the thesis of the author. Nonetheless, the author shall remain mindful of these questions as he proceeds with his work.

⁹ Kate Rounds, “The Fate of 111 First Street: Artists, Development, and the Destiny of a City,” Jersey City Magazine 6, no. 2 (fall/winter 2009/2010): 52-57. In the author’s opinion, this magazine article provides a great introduction to 111 1ˢᵗ Street. In the spirit of full disclosure, the author’s inspiration for his research and writing on 111 1ˢᵗ Street originated from his reading this article. Before reading this article, the author had only overheard conversations about the building and its community. His only encounter with the building was watching its demolition. Little did he suspect that he would spend several years of his scholastic career reading, thinking, and talking about 111 1ˢᵗ Street.

¹⁰ James F. Broderick, Paging New Jersey: a Literary Guide to the Garden State (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003). This interesting volume discusses the many respected authors who have called the Garden State home over the years and the novels set in the state. Broderick’s work represents a cottage industry among the state’s intelligentsia to reclaim and promote New Jersey as a state with a unique history and culture standing apart from New York and Philadelphia. A discussion of this phenomenon would be an engaging cultural study itself and goes well beyond the scope of this author’s project.

¹¹ Note: see Literature Review section for further discussion.
largely concerns itself with New York, London, and other major or world cities. This reality is easy to explain. Scholarship and writing require an intimidating amount of research and sweat. Any prospective study of New York promises to uncover a far greater amount of evidence and resources with comparative ease than the study of a city with fewer and less affluent cultural and educational institutions. For instance, it requires little effort and know-how to electronically search the historical *New York Times* index than it does to travel to a distant locale, leaf through a paper index, and laboriously scroll through reels of microfilm to find several articles in the local newspaper. Moreover, any scholar, author, or creative thinker builds upon previous work; therefore, this partiality to the well-worn paths continues. Such a pattern leads to the distinct possibility of monotony of thought and more worryingly the ignoring of alternative areas of research. This is not a criticism or a condemnation of the current scholarship. This is a simple statement of fact to explain the gaps in gentrification literature.

A major goal of this project is to attempt to fill one such gap in the scholarship. The study of 111 1st Street will shift the focus of scholarship away from the bustling, glamorous metropolis of New York to smaller, grittier but no less fascinating Jersey City on the left bank of the Hudson River. The author hopes that future students and scholars find a model in this thesis and initiate their own efforts in researching and writing about the satellites revolving around contemporary global cities or other unsung urban areas.

As noted, very little has been written about 111 1st Street, and no scholarship has documented the building and its community. After years of legal and even physical combat, the final residents left 111 1st Street in 2005 and the community scattered. Some of the artists still reside in Jersey City and remain active in the local arts and culture scene. Other artists still live in the surrounding area or in New Jersey. Some artists crossed the river and settled among the five
boroughs of New York City. Some residents even packed their possessions and left for purportedly more welcoming environs throughout the United States. With 111 1st Street demolished and its community dispersed, the site as a physical entity and a movement drifts further into the past and the danger of it being forgotten exists as a true possibility. This thesis aims to capture the story of this now departed artistic community and encase its memory and preserve it for future scholarship and appreciation. As many of the artists interviewed for this project stated: “The spirit of 111 lives on.” This writing will help ensure that belief.

This study of 111 1st Street would be impossible without an interdisciplinary approach. The author relied upon scholarship in the fields of history, sociology, political science, cultural studies, political economy, geography, cultural economics, and even works of memoir, art, and literature to develop his thinking and to construct a theoretical armature for his chronicle of 111 1st Street. In particular, the two major gentrification theories, the creative class theory, and the urban growth coalition theory heavily influenced his interpretation of the events surrounding 111 1st Street. This will be evident in the primary discussion of the site. Another goal of this project is to weave together these seemingly disparate theories into the discussion of gentrification and artists. No serious work on gentrification should ignore the urban growth coalition theory or the creative class theory. Unfortunately, although the proponents of these schools of thought appear to speak a similar language and investigate similar processes, they fail to fully communicate with another. Interdisciplinary scholarship allows this bridge to be built and enhances the understanding of gentrification as a historical, sociological, economic, and even political process. This approach will be utilized in the review of the literature.
Review of the Literature

Urbanists, geographers, and even armchair observers of the city acknowledge the role of artists in the ever-evolving gentrification process. Two competing models dominate current gentrification theory and these competing models interpret the presence and the role of the artist in gentrification far differently. Additionally, other urban theories---somewhat ignored or undervalued by gentrification scholars---can and should inform discussions concerning the artist and gentrification and possibly hint at a far less hostile and more complicated interaction between the artistic class and old-time residents of newly valorized neighborhoods.

Gentrification remains a vibrant, adaptive process; theory must allow itself a similar organic, elastic nature in its documentation and exploration of its subject.

The following discussion will present a targeted but regrettably limited summary of the battling models of gentrification and of the scholarship exploring the agency of artists. As with any honest academic work, this project raises another set of questions and suggests further research.

Production (Demand) Model of Gentrification

The production model or demand model of gentrification is solidly based in physical space and urban geography. In many ways, this model can be described as a Marxist interpretation of the development of space and property in the urban environment. In fact, the initial sketches of the production model of gentrification can be found in the work of David Harvey.\(^\text{12}\) Traditional neo-liberal economic theory states that property always lies at its “highest

and best possible use.” Harvey challenges this belief by stating that buildings and structures often do not represent the optimal use of land. Buildings must be demolished and replaced to achieve this optimal usage; however, a dilapidated building or an under-valorized property might still remain a productive investment. Thus, ownership often eschews optimal usage in order to maximize the original capitalization of the property.

Neil Smith pushes the limits of Harvey’s original conception of rent and property and ultimately establishes the production model of gentrification. Arguably, Smith’s most innovative and influential contribution to the gentrification debate remains his rent gap theory. The rent gap theory consists of three elements: property value, capitalized rent, and potential rent. The property value is simply the monetary value of the property and its structures. The capitalized rent is the income which the owner receives from the current usage of the property. The potential value is the maximum value of the property at its highest usage. As the area surrounding a given property develops and increases in exchange value, the gap between the capitalized value and the potential value of property grows. This is the rent gap. According to Smith, at the initial growth of the rent gap, property owners disinvest in property in order to maximize their initial investments and gain the maximum profit from the eventual sale of the property. This rent gap produces gentrification and displacement.

---

14 Neil Smith, The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City (London: Routledge, 1996). Additionally, Smith argues that gentrification also leads to a revanchist city. The revanchist strategy aims to eliminate the marginalized, the poor, the homeless, all unsavory elements---essentially the “other”---from the city and sanitize the city. This is a fascinating and disturbing argument. However, for the course of this discussion, this element of Smith’s work will remain untouched.
Smith further develops his production model by presenting gentrification as a global urban strategy promulgated and implemented by capital and neo-liberal proponents.\textsuperscript{15} Originally, gentrification emerged as a fitful, localized phenomenon. Now, it appears to exist as a coherent strategy and an adopted policy by governments increasingly throughout the world. Jason Hackworth expands this framework as well, arguing that gentrification---now a neo-liberal economic project---is a more corporate-driven and state-facilitated process than in past permutations.\textsuperscript{16}

Smith and production model theorists view artists as agents in the gentrification process. According to the production theory of gentrification, artists first tame a given neighborhood and then transform it into an environment amenable to capital and the middle class. This characterization of artists largely ignores the conflicted, often ambiguous role of artists and other creative types in gentrification. Artists and like-minded bohemians inarguably alter the character and the geography of a neighborhood or an urban area; however, they lack monetary capital and express distaste for consumption, homogeneity, and traditional middle-class values. Artists and their associates eventually become victims of gentrification themselves. For example, Greenwich Village, the historical bohemia of New York, now operates as a residency for the uber-wealthy and contains only isolated relics of its artistic past.

**Consumption (Demand) Model of Gentrification**

While the production model of gentrification centers on geography, the consumption model of gentrification rests upon a societal or a sociological armature. The genesis of this


model can be traced back to the work of Daniel Bell. Bell first articulated a post-industrial thesis, positing that a population of scientists, technocrats, and knowledge workers would create and maintain the means of a post-industrial society. The economy, society, and the state would eventually orient itself around this group. Richard Florida further explores and popularizes this concept.

In his study of gentrification in Canadian cities, David Ley classifies this emerging class as a new middle class. This new middle class espouses a set of mores and priorities far different than that of their post-war predecessors. First-wave gentrifiers—typically artists, sexual minorities, educators, and other such types—locate in the city to pursue a different lifestyle than that offered by the suburbs. Also, these early gentrifiers view the city as an authentic environment exuding a genuine sense of place. Regrettably, these desires seem to shift focus from politics, values, and aesthetics to mere consumerism. This is the trap and the dilemma of the consumption model of gentrification.

Ley returns to his hypothesis and expands upon it. He confronts the critics who blame artists for gentrification, noting that gentrification victimizes artists alongside poor and working class populations. Artists imbue a long neglected or abandoned space with an aura. This space or area grows in reputation and attracts capital and more affluent professionals. Then, the artists themselves are pushed out. Additionally, Ley returns to the problematic emphasis on

---

18 Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). Unfortunately, Florida’s reputation has fallen due to his almost shameless huckstering of his creative class program to businesses, civic leaders, and public officials. This does not discount his ideas, but it suggests that any thinker should approach them with skepticism.
consumption as a signifier of difference and distinction. By purchasing a unique product---such as a vintage hat or a pound of grass-fed beef---the consumer makes a cultural and a class statement. The politics and values of the back-to-the-city movement seem to have been forgotten.

Arguably, Ley’s work and that of Jon Caufield present the notion of the emancipatory city. The city and gentrification allow individuals social, economic, and political freedom denied in rural and suburban areas. Although not specifically writing about gentrification, Florida presents the notion of a creative class searching for places offering tolerances, culture, and amenities. This theory strongly parallels the consumption model.

Artists & Gentrification

Although no authoritative work exists on artists and their role and relationship in the gentrification process, several insightful and illustrative case studies explore the subject. Most famously, Sharon Zukin analyzes the transformation of Manhattan’s SoHo from a site of light industry to an artistic enclave and finally to a lucrative real estate market. Zukin formulated the theory of the artistic mode of production. Essentially, capital uses artists as cover for investment in an area. Investors, property owners, and capital encourage artists to reside in a locale, thus, improving the reputation and increasing the monetary value of the area. The lifestyle of the artist and the artistic space itself becomes a marketable commodity as well. This explains the birth of the loft as an enviable urban living space.

Other scholars use Zukin’s template as a starting-point for their own explorations of artists and gentrification. David Cole studies three cities along the Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH) train line in New Jersey: Hoboken, Jersey City, and Newark.\textsuperscript{23} Julie Podmore observes the loft trend and its linkage to artists in Montreal, Canada.\textsuperscript{24} Stuart Cameron and Jon Coaffee perceive the artistic mode of production as public policy in the state’s effort to rejuvenate and gentrify Gateshead in northeastern England.\textsuperscript{25}

Several recent case studies chronicle and analyze the transformation of neighborhoods by artists and the eventual gentrification of those neighborhoods. Christopher Mele presents a thorough social and cultural history of the Lower East Side, devoting several chapters to the placement and the role of artists in the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{26} Richard Lloyd observes the artistic and creative community in Wicker Park in Chicago and creates an ethnography of sorts of a contemporary bohemia.\textsuperscript{27} Most tellingly, John Paul Catungal, Deborah Leslie, and Yvonne Hii illustrate the displacement of artists due to gentrification in Liberty Village, Toronto, Canada.\textsuperscript{28}

Although intersecting at specific junctures, the competing gentrification models point to different forces behind the gentrification process. These models offer very different frameworks through which to perceive the role of artists in the urban sphere and in gentrification. The continual gentrification debates also point to the unresolved, yet nonetheless engaging

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{mele} Christopher Mele, \textit{Selling the Lower East Side: Culture, Real Estate, and Resistance in New York City} (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 2000).
\bibitem{lloyd} Richard Lloyd, \textit{Neo-Bohemia} (New York: Routledge, 2006).
\bibitem{catungal} John Paul Catungal, Deborah Leslie, and Yvonne Hii, “Geographies of Displacement in the Creative City: the Case of Liberty Village, Toronto,” \textit{Urban Studies} 46, no. 5/6 (May 2009): 1095-1114.
\end{thebibliography}
conversation concerning the relationship between artists and gentrification. If anything, the literature highlights the complex role of artists and the need for further research into the subject.
Methodology

As noted earlier, very little has been documented and written about the departed community at 111 1st Street. The last remaining tenants left the building in 2005, and the owner completed the demolition of the building two years later in 2007. Artists as a group maintain an almost gypsy-like culture: they shift from place to place in search of low rents and amenable settings to create art. Thus, many of the artists associated with 111 1st Street have left Jersey City and the New York metropolitan area. For these reasons—the scant existence of primary and secondary sources and the absence of a present population to study—the author expected a difficult if not impossible task of tracking down sources and piecing together scraps of reportage to create a coherent and compelling narrative. In fact, the author fully expected to ultimately curtail his project and continue his research and writing in a more limited fashion.

To his surprise, he found and contacted a large yet manageable number of individuals involved in the history and subsequent battle for 111 1st Street. Businesses, non-profits, and residents all presented the author with their anecdotes, observations, and impressions concerning 111 1st Street and the arts in Jersey City, New Jersey. Aware of the controversial and combative decisions made regarding 111 1st Street and, even more importantly, fully comprehending the long and rich history of political malfeasance and corruption in Jersey City and Hudson County, the author was pleasantly surprised by the willingness and generally helpfulness of county and city officials to speak with the author and assist him in his work.

Sources were contacted and interviews were conducted largely between May 2011 and September 2011. The author spoke with the subjects face-to-face or via telephone or via email. This project also demonstrated the utility of social media in contemporary original scholarship.
(and to this skeptic and critic of many of the elements of the still evolving computer age). The author was able to quickly locate possible sources through Facebook and make initial contact with them. The author also relied upon old-fashioned and thoroughly tested methods of establishing contact. He stopped by businesses and offices, left phone and voicemail messages, and wrote many emails. To develop and prune a list of potential contacts, the author relied on “snowball” sampling. After talking with a subject, the author asked the said subject to refer him to other relevant individuals. This proved to be remarkably successful. The author was able to meet and talk with several of the major figures involved in 111 1st Street and the failed fight for its survival. Also, the author used his knowledge of and contacts in the local arts community and political community to link with institutions and individuals. All interviewed subjects were asked a set list of questions. These questions varied depending on the individual interviewed (artists/resident; business; government agency/official; or, non-profit institution) and if the individual was active in the area during the life and death of 111 1st Street. These questions can be found in the appendix (See: Appendix II). In almost all instances, the author did not vary from the established questionnaire and avoided follow-up and tangential questions.

In the course of five months, the author contacted thirty-eight (38) parties. As stated above, these parties includes artists and residents of 111 1st Street, non-profit and civic institutions, and area businesses servicing artists or related to the local arts community. Twenty-one (21) artists and residents of 111 1st Street were contacted; ten (10) artists and residents were interviewed. Four (4) businesses were contacted; two (2) businesses were interviewed. Four (4) government officials were contacted; three (3) government officials were interviewed. Nine (9) non-profit and civic organizations were contacted; four (4) non-profit and civic organizations were interviewed. In total, nineteen (19) parties agreed to interviews. (Table 1 offers a complete
Several individuals declined to meet with the author. One developer flatly refused to talk with the author upon reading the waiver required by the Internal Review Board (IRB). Several artists and former residents of 111 1st Street complained of psychological and spiritual wounds over the struggle for the building and voiced no desire to revisit memories of the building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Contacted</th>
<th>Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artists &amp; Residents</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agencies &amp; Officials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit &amp; Civic Institutions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Statistics of Sources Contacted and Interviewed (May 2011-September 2011)

Archival research complimented the above described interview process. The New Jersey Room of the Jersey City Free Public Library maintains extensive archives and files. Contents, newspaper clippings, and assorted documents housed in this collection fleshed out the narrative.

---

29 This is a troubling and legitimate issue to be considered by present and future students and scholars. The developer in question appeared amiable and was referred to the author by another source. However, he refused to have further contact with the author, citing the waiver. A journalist or a non-academic author would not be required to furnish such a document to a source or an interviewee. This requirement severely hampers original research in the humanities and urban studies, especially when researching and discussing controversial and still raw subjects and topics. The author strongly urges the Urban Studies faculty to investigate this matter and press for a resolution favorable to scholarship and intellectual freedom.
largely provided by the residents and participants of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street.\textsuperscript{30} This collection is an invaluable resource for this and any future scholar and student.

\textsuperscript{30} The author utilized the following vertical files at the New Jersey Room of the Jersey City Free Public Library: Business & Industry: Lorillard Company; Buildings: 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street; Hudson County Arts: 1990s; and, Hudson County Arts: 2000s. The author cannot express enough gratitude to the library staff and resident historians who dutifully clipped newspaper articles, gathered seemingly worthless scraps of paper, and diligently built a rich, one-of-a-kind archive of local history, culture, and life. Without such people, this story and so many others could never be written or even imagined.
Chapter 1:

The Value of Art

Today, the borough of Brooklyn, New York, specifically its neighborhoods of Williamsburg, Greenpoint and now Bushwick, attracts young, hungry, and aspiring artists, craftsmen, writers, and creative people of all persuasions. (Admittedly, these neighborhoods also draw an alarming number of professional partiers, floaters, and hangers-on. However, every artistic scene in modern history has dealt with such a reality.)

The arts and culture establishment and the larger machinery of the cultural economy operates in Manhattan. On the other hand, the grassroots arts scene lives in Brooklyn. The neighborhoods of Williamsburg and Greenpoint have followed the trajectory first observed in Manhattan’s SoHo. A largely industrial landscape of small manufacturers, warehouses, and shipping depots gave way to artists’ lofts, cafes, and funky boutiques. Capital and investment soon followed, further altering the landscape and demographics. This transformation is ongoing in Williamsburg and its adjacent neighborhoods. Nonetheless, the presence of the arts and a population of artists still dominate the collective imagination and popular perception of the neighborhood.

31 Some scholars might argue that such a secondary population contains the seeds of the second wave of gentrification. This wave consists of people who are not risk-adverse artists or down-at-the-heel bohemians, but a class of people who appreciate the arts and all manners of creativity and simply wish to circulate within such a heady environment. David Ley, “Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification,” Urban Studies 40, no. 12 (November 2003): 2538-2541.
This shift of concentration of artists from Manhattan, largely from the East Village and the Lower East Side, to the Brooklyn waterfront was far from predetermined or inevitable.\(^{34}\) Instead, this population could have fled across the Hudson River and into Jersey City, New Jersey.\(^{35}\) 111 1\(^{st}\) Street could have served as a beachhead for such an invasion.\(^{36}\) In fact, many of the artists of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street moved to the building from exorbitantly priced studios and living spaces in Manhattan and Brooklyn. An interviewed artist succinctly summed up the possibilities and the sad fate of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street and maybe Jersey City itself as a haven for artists and associated creative types:

> “Jersey City is closer to Manhattan than Brooklyn … Promise always there [for Jersey City to develop as an arts hub], that’s why artists stayed so long. Interesting town, frustrating. Brooklyn was starting to happen, and Jersey City cut off its artists at the same time. The city doesn’t want artists … Town that could have been …”\(^{37}\)

The final thought contained in the above quote (“Town that could have been …”) captures the essence of the story of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street.

---

\(^{34}\) The subject of artists in the East Village and the Lower East Side and their role in gentrification are an endlessly fascinating subject for scholars. For a great summary, see Christopher Mele, *The Selling of the Lower East Side: Culture, Resistance, and Real Estate in New York City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). As stated, the author hopes to move the discussion of gentrification away from the comfortable environ of New York City. The author will avoid getting bogged down into discussions and asides about the subject. Nonetheless, any serious discussion of artists and gentrification must refer to New York City.

\(^{35}\) Artist trickled into Hoboken and, to a lesser degree, into Jersey City in the 1970s. David B. Cole, “Artists and Urban Development,” *Geographical Review* 77, no. 4 (October 1987): 391-407. Unfortunately, Hoboken felt that full assault of gentrification. Its proximity to Wall Street and its easy access via the PATH train and New Jersey Transit bus lines almost ensured that capital and real estate interests would dominate the city. Today, little archaeological evidence exists of a past arts community. Through conversations with artists and residents, the author learned that many of this original influx of artists, creative types, and urbanists, now in their 50s and 60s, either purchased property in Hoboken, moved to Jersey City or other areas in Hudson County, or altogether left New Jersey. Hoboken is now a full-blown repository of employees from the financial sector and exudes a stale, homogeneous mentality.

\(^{36}\) This thought was voiced by many of the interviewed artists. In fact, they lamented the fact that this did not occur. Interviews with author, June 26, 2011; interview with author, July 15, 2011.

\(^{37}\) Interview with author, July 15, 2011.
For its residents, 111 1st Street was more than just a building, a physical structure with four walls and a ceiling, and a collection of ragtag figures toying with art for a few years before getting serious about life. 111 1st Street was a moment, a flowering of creativity and artistic production. Just like any organic moment, whether it be Montmartre in Paris in the 1920s, Haight Asbury in San Francisco in the late 1960s, or Seattle in the 1990s, 111 1st Street had a finite lifespan. Several sources voiced similar sentiments:

That’s the nature of any arts scene: something dies and then is recreated elsewhere. and

All scenes have a shelf-life---scene hit fever pitch---amazing to see.

Every moment sparks, burns brightly, and then flickers out. Then, that movement is gone and never to return. Only later, once a movement has passed into history do outsiders recognize it as such a phenomenon.

***

Enter the Artists: The First Years of 111 1st Street

The beginning of 111 1st Street as an arts center and community resembles myth more than fact. This is a characteristic common to many artistic enclaves or, to use the proper

38 In his study of Wicker Park, Chicago, Richard Lloyd discussed Urbis Orbis, a café that operated in that neighborhood operated roughly for a decade (1989-1998) and served as a mecca of sorts for aspiring artists, wayfarers, and eccentrics. Even the café itself had an almost predetermined a half-life. The café serves a sample of bohemia in general. Richard Lloyd, Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City (New York: Routledge, 2006): 106-112. “Despite huge local popularity and national recognition that reached its zenith when Rolling Stone magazine named it “the coolest place [in Chicago] to suck down a cappuccino,” … It closed down in 1998 …Urbis Orbis did match the social vision of its proprietor, as a place where a local cadre of artists and others attracted to the lifestyle affectations of bohemia interacted and developed a sense of community … In 2001, Starbucks opened the outlet long dreaded by neighborhood purists …” Ibid: 112.

39 Interview with the author: June 22, 2011.

40 Interview with the author: July 15, 2011. Source compared 111 1st Street to the hippies starting in San Francisco.
terminology—bohemias. The concept of artists standing apart from society and constituting a unique and separate community was first found in nineteenth century Paris through the writings of the critic and theorist Walter Benjamin. Moreover, modern bohemia holds a symbiotic relationship with the city and the urban landscape. 111 1st Street belongs to this rich tradition.

Reportedly, artists began gravitating toward 111 1st Street in the late 1980s. A quasi-anonymous musician known as “Gennaro” rented a practice studio on the third floor of the former tobacco warehouse, earning him the designation as the first arts tenant. A former resident heavily involved in the community claimed this as fact:

Legend has it that the first "arts" tenant in the building was a musician who had a studio on the 3rd floor, a guy by the name of Gennaro. This was back in 1987-1988.

This statement alone establishes a creation myth for 111 1st Street: an unknown troubadour moves into a largely abandoned building, serving as a moral beacon for other individuals craving a space of their own. No written record exists, only whispers and rumors.

For the next two years, artists and musicians continued to hear about the low rents and large spaces of the building and planted the seeds for a large, yet physically insular community.

---


42 Ibid: 17: “… indeed, that the cumulative imagery of the artist in the city is directly inscribed on the practical strategies of contemporary social actors.” Ibid: 48-50. “Added in the early decades of the nineteenth century were the inescapably urban connotations of bohemia. Urbanism as a way of life is imprinted upon the bohemian project, inflecting both practical strategies and aesthetic representation.” Ibid: 49.


44 Interview with author, June 26, 2011.

45 This is a poetical and somewhat misleading statement. Different sources noted different people or groups as the first explorers or colonizers of 111 1st Street. However, the source cited in Footnote 35 is one of the more trusted and respected sources on the life and history of 111 1st Street. Thus, the naming of a musician named “Gennaro” will be accepted as fact, unless otherwise disputed or disproven. The author believes that this “Gennaro” is Gennaro Tedesco. Tedesco is one of several artists featured in an early news article on 111 1st Street. Beth Kissinger, “Arts Movement: Goodbye SoHo, Lightin’ Out for New Territory,” Jersey Journal, August 6, 1990.
in Jersey City. In the early 1990s, the building also continued to house small industries, the historic driver of the economy in the warehouse district and the Jersey City waterfront. The nascent arts community---itself a component in the local economic engine---voiced enthusiasm for the diversification within the building and, arguably, by extension the surrounding area:

The good thing about the building is that it’s not all artists, but woodworkers too … It helps break up that ‘all arts concept’ ---too much purity is not good.

This wrinkle in the expected gentrification narrative is worth considering. Artists, students, gays, and other risk-adverse populations are often considered to be the shock-troops of gentrification. Residents of 111 1st Street themselves were well aware of this process:

Artists gravitate to places where they can get cheap rent, with studio space, without the distraction of over development, chain stores, suburban comforts. Neglected older neighborhoods tend to be good places for such new migration. They want a sense of adventure by moving to a place that can serve as a proving ground for experimentation in a number of areas. In a sense we like being pioneers or homesteaders, especially in an urban location, sometimes rural, but not exclusively in major cities.

Another artist more succinctly described the role of artists in gentrification:

Typically, artists go the worst areas, clean it up, make it safe for yuppies.

---

46 “The building is also home to the businesses of some non-artists, including a dress manufacturer, a screen printing company and a carpentry shop.” *Ibid.*
48 Interview with author, July 11, 2011.
49 Interview with author, July 15, 2011.
Artists, in particular, first move into a given area and imbue it with a sense of cultural cachet and, in time, economic value.\(^5^0\) However, much of the criticism of gentrification focuses on displaced groups, predominantly inner-city minority populations and, to lesser degree, white working class populations. This was never an issue in the unfolding history of 111 1\(^st\) Street. The building stood amid neglected warehouses, silent railway tracks, cobblestone streets, and the former powerhouse for the Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) trains or the Hudson Tubes. Aside from the growing cluster of artists, no one lived in the dying industrial neighborhood, apart from the homeless and a certain criminal element. The gentrification was largely of an economic variety: light industry (small manufacturers, storage, and shipping) was slowly giving way to artistic production. Sharon Zukin first and best described this model in her landmark study of SoHo in Manhattan, and Winifred Curran further developed Zukin’s model in her research on Williamsburg, Brooklyn.\(^5^1\) The ownership of 111 1\(^st\) Street expressed a similar vision for the building in 1990.\(^5^2\)


\(^5^2\)“Ennis seems to be set on the “artists concept, though … Ennis envisions a “real arts” center---more artists, several galleries---in the future. ‘The potential is great,’ he says. ‘Anywhere artists go seems to enhance the community.’” Beth Kissinger, “Arts Movement: Goodbye SoHo, Lightin’ Out for New Territory,” *Jersey Journal*, August 6, 1990.
However, the initial batch of artists did not view the remaining light industrial inhabitants as their rivals for space and position. How much industry remained in the area is a legitimate question that has not been satisfactorily answered.\textsuperscript{53} In fact, the residents valued the presence of industry and considered the aesthetic of the area essential to their identity and creativity:

There was no road (now Washington Boulevard) from the Powerhouse to Newport … You could hear the foghorns at night … The waterfront was astoundingly beautiful—sandy shore, tumbleweeds packs of wild dogs, view of World Trade Center right in your face … Next to 111 was an open landfill full of artifacts, like old bottles and glass. People had metal detectors and would go scavenge … [The area] was a chromium-filled wasteland. Men in white suits would tell them not to dig in the earth …\textsuperscript{54}

A fellow artist of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street applied similar language to describe that area of Jersey City in the late 1980s and early 1990s:

For the first year or two, what is known as Washington Boulevard did not exist; it was mostly sand dunes that were frequented by tumbleweeds, the occasional rabbit, and feral dogs. Newport City was being developed …\textsuperscript{55}

Another former resident quite graphically described the vicinity surrounding 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and the neighboring warehouses:

[U]rban hell, cars on fire, mob dumped bodies there … \textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} The author wonders how to uncover this information. This would likely require reviewing past tax records and business directories. Such resources might not be readily available.
\textsuperscript{54} Interview with author, June 18, 2011.
\textsuperscript{55} Interview with author, June 26, 2011.
\textsuperscript{56} Interview with the author, July 15, 2011.
All the interviewed artists and residents spoke nostalgically, almost gleefully, of the grime, the grit, the danger, and the decay of that area of Jersey City during the beginning of their tenure at 111 1st Street. Gentrification scholarship and other academic and popular discussions have long classified artists as chronically risk-oblivious to the selection of their workspaces and homes. A large reason for this disposition is the overlooked fact that most artists fall into the strata of the low-income and possess little disposable wealth.\textsuperscript{57} Their existences are not as glamorous and fancy-free as held by the public imagination. In her study of arts neighborhoods in Toronto, Canada, Alison Bain supported such a statement by noting that “[t]he backdrop of everyday life for [the] artist consists of violence, immorality and deprivation.”\textsuperscript{58} However, this only partially answers the question as to why artists glance longingly at buildings such as 111 1st Street and locales such as Jersey City. What are their attractions?

In the public imagination, artists are synonymous with cities and the urban landscape.\textsuperscript{59} The association of the wild-eyed painter or brooding poet with cramped garrets and narrow alleys was born in nineteenth century Paris and entered the American consciousness in the polyglot streets of New York’s Greenwich Village in the opening decades of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{60} This Romantic conception found theoretical language first in Walter Benjamin’s

\textsuperscript{57} “In North America, the life of the artist is an invitation to voluntary poverty …” David Ley, “Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification,” \textit{Urban Studies} 40, no. 12 (November 2003): 2533.


\textsuperscript{59} Famous and influential exceptions to this relationship exist, such as Georgia O’Keeffe. Interview with Jessica Murphy, Ph.D.

\textsuperscript{60} Richard Lloyd, \textit{Neo Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Post-Industrial City} (New York: Routledge, 2006): 52: “In Paris, a variety of practical strategies and mythic associations of the modern artist coalesced, producing what has proved to be a durable model of la vie bohème, elements of which can be identified in a variety of urban locales …”; \textit{Ibid}: 54-55 “… the Parisian prototype served as a model for action and self-understanding and self-understanding actively and consciously incorporated into the lifestyle of the New York avant-garde, and further provided a frame within which the loose aggregation in Greenwich Village has been and continues to be interpreted by others.” \textit{Ibid}: 50-58.
writings on Paris in his fragmentary, yet simultaneously encyclopedic *Arcades Project.* Other scholars, including David Harvey and Richard Lloyd, built upon this characterization of the bohemian as a child of the Paris of Charles Baudelaire and Eugène Delacroix. However, this well positioned and widely accepted argument should not be taken as fact. Indeed, it should be viewed with healthy skepticism. Artists, men of letters, and intellectuals have always gravitated toward cities. In antiquity, philosophers, playwrights, and poets yearned to ply their trades in Athens and Rome. The court, the church, and patrons lived in the city-states of Renaissance Italy. Only briefly, during the Romantic Age, largely thanks to the lyrical lines of William Wordsworth, was the city viewed as harmful to the imagination and creativity and was the pastoral seen as the environment most salubrious to sensitive and reflective individuals. It is worth noting that this Romantic conceit was far from uniform in the American artistic and intellectual circles. The transcendentalist writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau closely followed the script initially penned by William Wordsworth in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads.* However, nature is seen as a violent and destructive force in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick,* and Satan literally walks in the woods in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter.*

Paris and later Greenwich Village belonged to historical symbiosis between artists and the city. Paris was not a beginning, just merely another—albeit lively and fertile—setting and stage for generations of artists. Cities and all their flaws and strengths are essential to the arts and artists. Artists have always been and continue to be urban creatures.

---


63 “[Artists] remain disproportionately committed to center-city living, even as center cities struggle to weather the effects of economic restructuring. In fact, … artists are an especially fast-growing population in cities not traditionally associated with cultural production, including Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Detroit. Bohemia, if
belonged to this rich history and tradition that began in ancient Athens and stretches to the current day.

By late 1990, the ownership and the management of the building appeared to be marketing 111 1st Street solely to artists. A press packet dated November 6, 1990 and written by said parties named the building “The Arts Center on First, Inc.” The release begins with an emphasis on the almost spontaneous and mythical beginning of the 111 1st Street as a magnet for artists and then methodically touts the following assets: the concentration of artists (eighty artists and artisans at that date), the variety of studios, 10,000 square feet dedicated to a future gallery, the continuous twenty-four hour access and security, utilities and services, the nearby PATH stations, and, of course, the site’s close proximity to the art capital of the world---New York City. The packet also contains an advertisement, likely for placement in magazine, newspapers, and other print publications (See Figure 6). The emphasis on the attraction and the retention of artists as tenants and residents figures prominently in the later history and the final conflict over the fate of the building. The ownership---albeit in the self-promoting and always suspect medium of a public relations notice---described itself as:

---

defined solely as an urban artists’ district, has only become more frequent in the postmodern period.” Richard Lloyd, *Neo Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Post-Industrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 66.

64 “In the Spring of 1989 a local artist inquired if he could rent space to paint in … The first artist arrived and word of mouth set other artists to the 100 year old P. Lorillard cigarette factory at 111 First Street …” “The Arts Are on First,” Press release.

65 The discovery of this press packet and the accompanying advertisement is important in the history and the comprehension of 111 1st Street. This fact cannot be undervalued. The author became fascinated by 111 1st Street after reading a brief article on the subject in a local magazine. Kate Rounds, “The Fate of 111 First Street: Artists, Development, and the Destiny of a City,” *Jersey City Magazine* 6, no. 2 (fall/winter 2009/2010): 52-57. The article noted that the lofts and studio space in 111 1st Street had been purportedly advertised in various publications, including *The Village Voice*. None of the interviewed subjects attested to this statement. However, the existence of this press packet provides credence to the statement. Also, any individual or group hoping to attract artists in the late 1980s and early 1990s would have likely purchased advertising space in *The Village Voice*. A copy of this crucial document is kept in the collection of the New Jersey Room at the Jersey City Free Public Library. This project underscores the importance of public libraries and the preservation and promotion of local history and largely forgotten moments.
… arts oriented; though the opportunity came to them [the ownership and management] unplanned, they are looking forward to all the challenges and personal rewards that will be there in the future. It is one project that New Gold and the city of Jersey City will take pride in seeing through to fruition. 66

In the early years of the building’s life as an arts community, the relationship between the ownership and the artists appeared to be mutually respectful and beneficial, if not outright symbiotic. When and how did this relationship decay into an antagonistic and destructive one?

A month earlier in October 1990, approximately twenty-eight artists housed in 111 1st Street opened their studios and showcased their work in the Second Annual Artists Open Studio Tour. (This tour continues to the present in Jersey City and recently marked its twenty-fourth anniversary in 2011. As to be expected, the tour is now a more formal event and is organized and funded by the county and municipal government and corporate, local businesses, and non-profit sponsors.) 111 1st Street was the marquee of the tour, and a reported 1,500 people visited. The mayor of Jersey City, Gerald McCann, toured the building and purchased art. 67 The successful turnout generated by the tour and specifically by 111 1st Street stirred a feeling among the ownership and the artists that the building could become a very special and significant space for the local and possibly the national arts scene. 68 The owner of an art gallery on nearby Van Vorst Park, Richard McAllister, expressed optimism for the then burgeoning Jersey City arts scene:

67 Gerald McCann is one of many notorious, colorful, memorable, and ultimately shameless characters of Jersey City and Hudson County politics. In his second and non-consecutive term as mayor, he was charged and convicted on federal charges in savings-and-loan scam in 1992. Although barred from holding office, McCann remained involved in local politics as a behind-the-scenes player. He won a seat on the Jersey City Board of Education in 2007 and subsequently lost his seat in 2011 to a reform ticket. Evan Sperick, “That Felon Inspecting Trash? He Used to Be Mayor,” New York Times, October 7, 2011.
I just knew that if I built it [Van Vorst Art Gallery], people would come … Until now, Jersey City has been thought of as a poor stepsister to the Hudson County art scene … It is time that Jersey City artists started getting more exposure to the public through exhibits in their own community.\(^69\)

The presence of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street undoubtedly contributed to this ebullience among the local cultural class and initiated a clustering effect. As early as 1991, a reporter from the New York Times rode the PATH train across the Hudson River to investigate and chronicle the nascent art scene, wondering if the seeds of a new SoHo were germinating among the industrial decay of Manhattan’s smaller sibling. Several galleries popped up and an estimated four hundred artists honed their craft within walking distance of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street.\(^70\)

At roughly the same time, the ownership of the building changed hands in one of the stranger and murkier episodes in the long, tangled history of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street. This change of ownership may very well serve as a pivotal moment in the history of the building and a prime mover in its eventual and lamentable demise.

The New Gold Equities Corporation signed a lease on 110 1\(^{st}\) Street and 111 1\(^{st}\) Street in October 1988 with an option to purchase both properties. The real estate company was owned by Steven Romer, an area businessman and attorney. In May 1989, New Gold contracted to sell the purchase rights for $18.4 million. However, the deal collapsed over a $500,000 deposit check, and New Gold filled a lawsuit against the would-be purchaser. These transactions paralleled the marketing of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street toward artists and the very crude rehabilitation of the building for arts studios. New Gold and Romer exercised their claim to buy both warehouses in

\(^{70}\) Ibid.
the summer of 1990 for $11 million. Tracking down the origin of those funds revealed an opaque and tangled record of finances.

By late 1990, New Gold and Romer were required to make two hefty interest payments to an entity known as Bridgehampton Estates, “a company affiliated with a well-known Manhattan real estate entrepreneur.”71 This “entrepreneur” was likely Lloyd Goldman, the property owner with whom the residents and artists of 111 1st Street eventually clashed. New Gold and Romer aspired to refinance their debts, allowing them to free up liquid cash, pay off the loans, and renovate 111 1st Street. Romer personally shopped around for a deal to recalibrate the financing behind the two buildings. He entered discussions with a Los Angeles-based development company for a refinancing package worth $19.3 million and a multi-million dollar policy on Romer’s own life. This deal failed to reach fruition.

On New Year’s Eve 1990, Romer disappeared with an estimated $15 million dollars of clients’ funds. Romer surrendered himself at the offices of the Manhattan District Attorney on February 25, 1991, claiming a representative of “X Corporation” had kidnapped him at a stoplight in Queens on New Year’s Eve. Romer then somehow escaped from his captors and went underground at an undisclosed location in the continental United States. Romer stated that he had incurred the wrath of X Corporation when he attempted to start an electric car company in the 1970s. For the next twenty years, this entity hacked into his bank and computer accounts and siphoned away funds from his clients and his own personal interests. Romer suggested that the X Corporation was indeed General Motors or General Electric. The prosecution under the aegis of longtime district attorney Robert Morgenthau uncovered Romer’s involvement in gold mining

---

in Sierra Leone and his supporting a West African mistress in a Manhattan apartment. A jury summarily convicted Steven Romer on fourteen charges, including first-degree grand larceny.\textsuperscript{72}

Former residents of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street recalled an even less tidy account of the events surrounding the change in ownership of the buildings in the early months of 1991. Several residents, in fact, spoke of running gun battles in 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and the presence of mafia-related goons during the tussle over the ownership.\textsuperscript{73} One source summarized the events as such:

\begin{quote}
For a month following [Romer’s] disappearance, BLDG Management, owned by multi-billionaire Lloyd Goldman, moved in to protect its investment. (Goldman had lent $400,000 so the absconded lawyer could buy 111 First and 110 First.) He sent three men to take over the office and one of them had a hand gun. Two different "owners" were now competing for our rent. This lasted several weeks until it was resolved in court in Goldman's favor.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

Other sources offered similar suggestions of nefarious doings by the now warring management firms. Events occurring later in 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street provide credibility to charges of criminal connections or, at least, tolerance of a criminal element within the building. A news article exploring the growth of a local arts scene in Jersey City made no mention of the weird and scandalous events surrounding the change in ownership of 111 Street, merely noting that Properties Management Company had recently taken over operating the building.\textsuperscript{75} This marks the only reference to this company known to the author: his research uncovered no other mention of it.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 40-44.
\textsuperscript{73} Interview with author, June 18, 2011; interview with author, June 26, 2011.
\textsuperscript{74} Interview with author, June 26, 2011.
Rumor and possible tall tales aside, the disappearance and later bizarre resurfacing of Steven Romer initiated a complete turnover in the ownership of 111 Street. Lloyd Goldman, who lent large sums of money to Steven Romer to purchase 110 1st Street and 111 1st Street, scooped up both properties in bankruptcy court in March 1991 for $3.4 million and then assumed full ownership of the buildings.\textsuperscript{76} The ownership and management of the building was now constituted under a corporate entity by the name of New Gold Equities.\textsuperscript{77} From a historical perspective, the entrance of Lloyd Goldman as the primary owner of 111 1st Street altered the trajectory of the building.

Lloyd Goldman was and is one the largest and most powerful real estate moguls in the New York City region with a portfolio estimated at $2 billion. When Larry Silverstein bid on the lease on the World Trade Center in 2001, he looked to Goldman for funding.\textsuperscript{78} The company currently owned by Lloyd Goldman, BLDG Management, is one the most exclusive and works with a select number of parties. In fact, an Internet search reveals no website for BLDG Management.

An investor of Goldman’s caliber purchases property with likely both short-term and long-term strategies to maximize profit. In the short-term, this strategy seemed to involve the artists of 111 1st Street; however, in the long-term, far more money could potentially be reaped from the redevelopment of the site than that generated by a tribe of hardscrabble bohemians. Such a plan coincides with patterns observed by gentrification theorists of both supply-side and

\textsuperscript{76}William Rodwell, \textit{Timeline: 111 First Street, Jersey City, NJ: 1866-2005}.

\textsuperscript{77}The actual name of the corporate entity largely owned by Lloyd Goldman is confusing and appears inconsistently in print and interviews as BLDG Management and New Gold Equities. Recently publications refer to the body as BLDG Management. For the sake of simplicity and in order to avoid confusing the reader, the author will use the name of New Gold Equities. The author invites correction and clarification on this matter.

\textsuperscript{78}Alex Frangos, and Peter Grant, “Meet the Other World Trade Center Builder,” \textit{Wall Street Journal}, September 11, 2008, Real Estate.
demand-side schools of thought and also proponents of the urban growth machine theory. This
conflict of values eventually ignited the battle between Goldman and the artists.

Oddly enough, the first years of Goldman’s ownership of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street were a
honeymoon period for both the artists and the landlord and for the overall artistic community of
Jersey City. New Gold Equities, in fact, petitioned the city government to alter the zoning of the
structure, changing its designation from a manufacturing site to artists’ work studios. This push
met with a warm reception from the municipal bureaucracy and zoning board, which
unanimously approved the application. The attorney for the ownership stated that 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street
would be entirely converted to studios of various sizes and rented exclusively to artists. The
Jersey City planning director remarked that the zoning change and the artist colony were “step[s]
to bring the warehouse district back to life.”\textsuperscript{79}

Artists continued to view their place and their future in Jersey City with optimism and
excitement. Potential and possibility appeared to be the watchwords of the day. This period of
mutual enthusiasm and growth coincided with the resurgence of Jersey City, notably its decades-
dormant waterfront, and the movement of artists to 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and Jersey City must be viewed
within this context.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Jersey City stood as a hub of shipping,
transportation, storage, and industry. This rough environment found cinematic expression in the
1954 film \textit{On the Waterfront}. Immigrants---mainly, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European---
flocked to Jersey City and the surrounding cities and townships of Hudson County for plentiful
blue-collar jobs. The Irish began arriving in Jersey City before the Civil War and eventually

dominated municipal and county politics reaching their apotheosis with the infamous Frank Hague, who served as mayor from 1917 to 1947.\textsuperscript{80} Indeed, Irish-American politicians continue to exert control over the Democratic machine---an astounding and impressive feat considering their membership in an increasingly shrinking demographic (roughly 5.6\% of the population).

Following the Second World War, Jersey City suffered a painful decline, following the pattern of other older Northeastern cities. The population contracted and became poorer and less middle-class and less white. Once mighty factories such as Colgate, American Can Company, Ticonderoga Pencil, and others shuttered. The railroad tracks fell silent and the docks rotted and fell into the Hudson River. Jersey City seemed fated to become another Camden or Newark, other formerly muscular manufacturing hubs written off by investors and elites and allowed to slip into a long, painful, and often violent death.

In the mid-1980s and the 1990s, the prospects of Jersey City began to improve. Real estate investors began to develop property along the waterfront, constructing an expanding cluster of office and residential towers. Banking, insurance, and financial firms looking for cheaper rents and new facilities looked to Jersey City to house back-end operations. Individuals priced out of Manhattan and later Brooklyn discovered the PATH trains and bus routes providing easy and reliable access to New York City. The 1990 census recorded the first increase in the Jersey City population since approximately 1930. In 1992, Bret Schundler won a special election to fill the mayor’s office, becoming the first executive not affiliated with the political

machine in decades and the first Republican mayor of Jersey City since Mark Fagan in 1917.  

Housing values ticked upward, city services improved, and taxes stabilized in this period as well. Overall, Jersey City appeared to be moving away from the precipice and toward a sunnier future.

During this era, the artists of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street, its ownership, and the municipal government seemed to express unity over the goals and vision for 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and the surrounding warehouse district. The city government prodded by local artists and a non-profit arts organization, Pro Arts, discussed altering the zoning of the area and creating an arts district encompassing the warehouses desired by artists and fellow travelers. This project was named Work and Live District Overlay (WALDO).

On June 26, 1996, the Jersey City council unanimously passed the zoning ordinance creating WALDO, and Mayor Schundler signed the legislation on the following day June 27, 1996, thus, making the creation and promotion of the district the official policy of the zoning department and the elected government. This legislation also created an artist certification board. This board would serve as a peer review committee, determining whether applicants for residency in WALDO were, in fact, practicing and professional artists.

---

81 Schundler was seen as a Rudolf Giuliani-style mayor and still is viewed favorably by many voters and citizens. Following his two terms as mayor of Jersey City, Bret Schundler launched two failed attempts at New Jersey’s governor’s office, tacking far to the right on social issues, such as abortion, gays, and guns. This provided him with little traction in a largely middle-class, educated, and arguably moderate-to-liberal state. Notice the current Republican governor’s, Chris Christie’s, avoidance of such debates in his campaign for governor and management of public affairs and policy. Schundler announced a third mayoral bid in 2009, but left the race likely due to the massive financial advantage of the incumbent mayor Jeremiah Healy.

82 The formation and viability of a non-profit group dedicated to advocating to the needs and interests of artists and arts-related businesses testifies to the strengthening of the arts community and their long-term dedication to Jersey City and belief in the city as an alternative arts universe. One subject blankly stated that “[t]he nucleus of artists in [111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street] also gave rise to an interest in creating a member-based professional arts organization. An earlier group who organized exhibits in the building itself were founding members of Pro Arts.” Interview with author, July 27, 2011. Indeed, the continual clustering of artists at 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street resulted in the emergence of ProArts.

The ordinance demarcated a roughly seven-and-half block area as the new arts zone. The WALDO district essentially mirrored the cluster of warehouses including 111 1st Street, and the borders of WALDO ran from Luis Muñoz Marin Boulevard to Washington Boulevard from west to east and from Second Street to Morgan Street from north to south (See: Map 2). The ordinance changed the zoning and allowed for arts studios and work/live studios in the warehouses and buildings falling within the district. It also permitted arts-related retail, such as art supply stores, galleries, and framing shops, performance spaces for theater, poetry, and dance, and bars. However, the legislation sternly disallowed rock or music clubs.84

These WALDO zoning ordinances served as an overlay to the preexisting zoning designation, that is, industrial usage. The language of the ordinance clearly stated that property owners could elect to continue to utilize buildings and land within WALDO for their historical industrial uses. Likewise, owners could embrace the WALDO zoning and redevelop their property for artists and art-related businesses. The city appeared to be devising a flexible and multi-pronged development strategy: encouraging the development of the arts and the development of property for that economic and cultural use and also providing property owners with the option to retain and attract traditional industrial tenants. In fact, the ordinance allowed

---

84 This line in the ordinance reflects a long-standing contention in Jersey City that continues to the present. Jersey City maintains and enforces comparatively strict music and cabaret laws. This partially explains the dearth of live music venues compared to Williamsburg, Asbury Park, or, sadly enough, even Hoboken. City council members are currently working on reforming the de facto ban. Historically, this bias against music may very well be traced back to the long mayoralty of Frank Hague, who viewed and promoted himself as a moralizing crusader, zealously closing down dance halls and brothels. “He allowed no nightclubs or houses of prostitution in the city, kept the streets clean of litter and vagrants, and banned the presence of women in bars …” Carmela Karnoutsos, “Frank Hague, 1876-1956, Mayor of Jersey City 1917-1946, (Retired), Jersey City: Past and Present, http://www.njcu.edu/programs/jhistory/pages/h_pages/hague_frank.htm.
for owners to use a portion of a parcel for the arts and another portion for industry. The Jersey City planning director reaffirmed this strategy:

We don’t want to make [WALDO] too chi-chi … We want to keep it on the funky side. So what goes in has to be industrial strength: galleries interspersed with truck-loading docks.86

The official formation of WALDO as an arts district and its structures as artists’ studios and apartments appears to directly contrast with the deindustrialization and redevelopment as observed by Zukin in SoHo and later by Curran in Williamsburg. At least at the origin of the district, the city expressed a desire to retain an industrial economic base in the city and allow for the reintroduction of industry and manufacturing. The city officials viewed the arts as a single component of a larger economy---not a new, emergent economic sector supplanting an older, contracting one.

The artists of 111 1st Street and the general artistic community of Jersey City expressed both affinity and appreciation for the policies and the politics of Mayor Bret Schundler, who served as the highest elected officer of the city during the 1990s, the WALDO discussion, and the general détente between the arts, the ownership of the building, and the city government.87 During his reelection in 1997, an informal artists group promoted and supported Schundler’s

87 Interview with author, June 18, 2011; interview with author June 29, 2011.
reelection bid and distributed flyers to hundreds of fellow artists attacking Schundler’s rival in the race and touting Schundler’s accomplishments in the arts and culture sphere.  

The stated policy stances of both Schundler and his rival, Jerramiah Healy, the current mayor of Jersey City as of 2012, stood as interesting reversals of traditional party platforms and public preconceptions of local and national parties. Schundler was and remains a Republican; in fact, as he transitioned from a local political figure to a state politician, Schundler embraced a far more conservative ideology and policy program, especially on social issues. Healy was and remains a Democrat. He was an early supporter of President Barack Obama during the 2008 Democratic primary when a large and influential portion of the state party lined up behind the candidacy of Senator Hillary Clinton. In his own reelection campaign of 2009, Healy slavishly and somewhat humorously underscored his endorsement of Obama by airing footage of that moment on a mobile screen mounted on flatbed trucks throughout the city.

However, on the issue of the arts and the government’s role in the arts, Schundler and Healy expressed policy positions diametrically opposed to the generally accepted dogma of their respective parties. Healy clearly stated in a candidate forum at the now-defunct Jersey City Museum that the government should not support the arts. Later, he qualified that statement by saying that “[t]here is nothing more opposite than artists and government. Government has always been the [sic] anathema to artistic expression.”

Schundler, on the other hand, listed his

---


89 Brian Donohue, “Artists Paint Rosy Picture of Mayor,” *Jersey Journal*, June 20, 1997. Healy also attempted to boast his cultural cachet by claiming that he “read more fine novels, plays or great films than anybody in their organization.” This is a humorous comment for any student of Jersey City politics or anyone familiar with the colorful and occasionally embarrassing antics of Healy. In the past, he was photographed passed out naked and drunk in front of his home, arrested and convicted for engaging in a brawl with police officers down the Jersey Shore, releasing a Christmas album, singing on the local morning news show, and frequenting local bars and taverns.
administration’s increased funding for the museum, its channeling of grants for mural art, its organizing an arts summit, and its rezoning of the area around 111 1st Street. Also noteworthy was Schundler’s rationale for promoting the arts and nurturing a local arts scene. Schundler believed that “[m]aking [Jersey City] more beautiful through the sponsorship of public arts [was] very important” and that the city should flaunt its vibrant cultural scene.\textsuperscript{90} Schundler—-at least, during the heat of his reelection campaign—-saw intrinsic value in the arts for their own sake. He did not simply view arts as another cog in the economic machine or a tool to simply spur growth and increase property values and tax ratables. Art imbued Jersey City with a sense of life, attraction, and imagination.\textsuperscript{91} This is unusually enlightened philosophical and policy position for a politician of any stripe, especially a card-carrying member of the Republican Party, which almost always seeks the defunding of the National Endowment of the Arts and Corporation for Public Broadcasting after every national electoral victory.

During this period, 111 1st Street seemed poised to become the center of the arts community in Jersey City. In addition to the occasional articles in the local Jersey City daily \textit{The Jersey Journal, The Newark Star-Ledger}, the premiere newspaper in New Jersey, and \textit{The New York Times}, several television stations broadcast stories on the community at 111 1st Street. NJN aired a feature on the opening of a building-wide exhibition on November 24, 1995.\textsuperscript{92} Channel 11 New York broadcast a story on the development and state of the arts community,

\textsuperscript{91} Some interviewed artists believed that Schundler supported the arts to allow for an easier redevelopment of the waterfront and nearby areas. This would fit nicely with the thinking of the supply-minded theorists of gentrification and urban growth coalition theorists. Also, other sources that argued some of the blame for demise of 111 1st Street belonged to Schundler for his refusal or inability to broker a deal between the owner of the property and its artists in 1990s. This would have been possible during that period, for the real estate bubble of the 2000s had yet to swell. Interview with the author, June 25, 2011; interview with author, July 19, 2011.  .\textsuperscript{92} NJN News, “Solid State Opening at 111 First St.,” November 24, 1995, http://www.youtube.com/user/underdevelopmentTV#p/u/38/nPdI_c0QDUk.
entitled “The New SoHo” on November 11, 1996.\textsuperscript{93} \textit{State of the Arts}, a program on NJN exploring the arts and culture of New Jersey, had a program on the studio tour of 2000 in the autumn of that year, entirely focusing on the resident artists of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street.\textsuperscript{94} Several of the artists profiled in the television news stories figured prominently in the organization of the residents and artists of the warehouse and in the eventual struggle with its ownership. This observation is noteworthy and raises several unanswerable, speculative questions. Were these artists the most media savvy and, therefore, better positioned to interact with the city government and the media during the struggle? Or, did these artists have the most to lose by vacating the building and losing their somewhat elevated place in the arts community?\textsuperscript{95}

Former residents and artists painted a thrilling, seductive, and almost mythic portrait of the action and activity contained within 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street during this fertile, ebullient era. One artist described the building as:

\begin{quote}
the epicenter of the art world in Jersey City … So cool, worth checking out every year … One-half [of two hundred] artists opened their studios---everyone tried to have better parties to compete with one another … [There were] large, open studios, parties, acrobats … \textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

Another past resident fondly recalled:

\begin{quote}
Cachet [of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street grew] with the studio tour. Underground parties drew people … People had parties to improve their space---rent parties … My roommate and I would rollerblade around the
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{94} State of the Arts, “Studio Tour 2000,” NJN, [autumn 2000], http://www.youtube.com/user/underdevelopmentTV#p/u/20/1VzzmhCq3oo.
\textsuperscript{95} An interviewed artist raised such a thought during his conversation with the author. “Tenants association [members] were artists their whole lives … [They were] finally getting attention and press, probably liked the attention.” Interview with author, July 15, 2011.
\textsuperscript{96} Interview with author, July 15, 2011.
\end{flushright}
building until we found a party …Russians and Eastern bloc immigrants threw the best parties …

One artist likened 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street to a de facto arts institution or museum:

It was an informal community that thru [sic] proximity and available space functioned as a kind of unofficial arts institution. Because of this, outsiders come to 111 the way they would gravitate toward other institutions; they came to see the artwork, to fraternize with interesting people, to be entertained by art, music, and other performance.

The words of another former artist captured the unique nexus of creativity and mystery within the building:

Open any door along the warren of funky passages and you entered another world: loft-size artists’ studios, workshops, live/work residences, exhibition spaces, a yoga studio, a recording studio, more than one small film studio, scenery and prop shops, mysterious spaces filled with long-ago abandoned machinery of all sorts, and some places where nobody was sure exactly what was going on.

In certain ways, 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street resembled an artistic collective or commune:

The community was composed of artists who lived and worked or just worked there. There were small businesses such as wood shops or fabricators. There were film makers, art printers, commercial photographers, computer technicians, events planners, milliners, dress makers, stage production fabricator, musicians, sound engineers, etc. Businesses often collaborated or worked for each other. Some bartered services or products. For many years it was a loose community where people lived and worked together. Many were friends, close friends or familiar to each other.

\textsuperscript{97} Interview with author, July 21, 2011.
\textsuperscript{98} Interview with author, June 5, 2011.
\textsuperscript{99} Interview with author, June 30, 2011.
\textsuperscript{100} Interview with author, June 29, 2011.
Other artists similarly described such a community-oriented environment, in which artists and other residents were able to benefit and take advantage of the collective knowledge, skills, and resources of their fellow tenants:

It was also a unique repository of technical information, where I could find advice and assistance for almost anything. I got to know many people who remain my friends to this day. It was also a place to network, to organize, to sharpen your skills, see the work of other artists, share information and to publicize and find out about events in the arts community.  

For one artist—and likely many, if not hundreds of others who passed through the maze-like halls of the building---111 1st Street allowed her to “100% pursue dream as a creative individual in environment that allowed it.” Such a positive outlook appeared to be wholly prevalent concerning the building, its community, and the Jersey City arts scene (and the city itself in many ways) throughout the mid-1990s and until the early 2000s. The conditions—the slow, yet steady press coverage, the public policy coming from city hall, the rapidly growing art community and its increasing reputation—all seemed to foretell an intoxicating and propitious future for 111 1st Street and its collection of ambitious artists and craftsmen.

So, what happened?

---

101 Interview with author, June 30, 2011.
102 Interview with author, June 18, 2011.
Chapter 2:

Trouble Brewing: The Future No Longer So Bright

Unlike the plot of a novel or the storyline of a film, the path of history is rarely determined by a single and solitary act, event, or moment. In our hyper-mediated age, it is seductive to view and interpret history through the facile frameworks and melodrama seen in television programs and popular films. However, history evolves within a shifting context of human institutions and actors and unseen events. Economics, politics, technology, science, and culture all impact the course of history arguably with the same force---albeit, often more quietly and subtly---than a war or a shocking event. Historical changes result from a series or collection of actions and figures. 111 1st Street must be understood within these parameters.

All the interviewed sources emphasized that the relationship between the building’s residents and ownership soured and quickly become combative, even violent at times at the beginning of the 21st century. No one could point to a single exchange or event as the turning point or the source of the mutual animosity. (As written earlier, the switch in ownership from Steven Romer to Lloyd Goldman in 1992 might be viewed as a pivot point---thanks to the always immeasurable benefit of hindsight---but other factors played just as significantly into the decay of the relationship between the ownership and the artists of 111 1st Street.) Something changed dramatically between the years of 1998 and 2001. Accounts and news stories prior to 2001 all underscored and promoted the positive agglomeration of artists and antecedent growth and renewal of 111 1st Street and its surrounding neighborhood.103 After 2001, new stories from the same outlets and publications communicated growing pessimism among the artists and the

---

residents and their increasingly insecure status with the management and ownership of the building. As early as October 2001, newspaper stories reported on the artists’ dissatisfaction with the management of the warehouse. Artists vociferously, if not hysterically, complained about a threatened curfew for 111 1st Street, declaring that the building “seemed like the Utopia for artists, but it’s like hell.”

Artists as a group and as individuals do not adhere to a strict nine-to-five regimen: unorthodox work schedules and habits are often associated with a bohemian lifestyle. Whether this popular romantic stereotype and image bear any reflection of reality is another question. The majority of long-term successful artists in various forms and media (painting, literature, music, etc.) exhibit an admirable work ethic and dedication to craft that requires creating art throughout long, steady hours and stretches of time. Nonetheless, a curfew imposed upon an arts studio (or a vast complex of studios, in the case of 111 1st Street) would stand as a great deterrent to the production of art. Practically speaking, many of the artists working out of the warehouse did not live on commissions and sales of their art: they maintained full-time jobs and practiced their avocation in the evenings and on weekends. Another, an often underappreciated reality about artisans and artists is that they are small businessmen. A curfew would directly and quite negatively impact their ability to successfully function in that capacity.

---

105 Patti Smith chronicles the development of Robert Mapplethorpe as an artist and his steadfast and obsessive dedication to the constant improvement of his work and his skills in her recent memoir. Incidentally, Smith’s memoir captures the essence and texture of New York’s bohemia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is a must-read for any scholar, thinker, or reader interested in the New York arts scene or the life of an artist. Patti Smith, *Just Kids* (New York: Ecco, 2010). The pseudonymous street artist Banksy has also commented on the gradual and difficult growth of the artist in the 2010 documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop*. These are only two contemporary statements of the sheer work required to become and succeed as an artist.
106 Prescott Tolk, “Where’s WALDO: Artists Told They Can Only Access Their Lofts at Certain Times,” *Jersey City Reporter*, December 2, 2001. While discussing their travails at 111 1st Street, several artists and others associated with the community specifically noted their increased inability to operate as businessmen. This further
When the artists first raised an outcry over the possible curfew, the ownership wavered over the implementation of said policy and explained the reasoning behind it as a safety issue:

We think that there may be some people there at night who shouldn’t be, including people who may be living there. It’s something that we’re going to try to stop. ¹⁰⁷

This sudden concern over residency requires closer examination. The ownership’s issue with artists actually living in the building rather than simply using the space as studios---a direct violation of the zoning for commercial property---was aired publicly for the first time in 2001. In fact, the cited news article is the first mention in print of the ownership’s problem with illegal residents in the building. For many years, the artists’ living situation in the building was an open secret, if it was a secret at all. Many earlier news features on 111 1st Street mentioned this arrangement. More importantly, former residents attested to this fact:

Unspoken agreement [between the management and the residents], couldn’t admit to living there. Owner installed sinks, bathrooms. People had secret knocks. Fire inspectors always trying to catch them [living in the building]. Secret walls to hide things. Artists from the former USSR would say “This is not scary. This like Russia.” ¹⁰⁸

Another former resident bluntly declared the ownership’s or, at the very least, the site manager’s complicity in the illegal usage of the studios as residencies:

Goldman’s agent would build toilets and showers---proof of residency. ¹⁰⁹

As the local media began covering the growing dispute between the ownership and the residents, a general narrative developed and explained that the thorny question of the artists’ challenges the romantic conception of the artists. Interview with author, June 7, 2011; interview with author, July 19, 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with author, June 18, 2011.
¹⁰⁹ Interview with author, June 15, 2011.
residency and the threatened curfew sparked this increasing public argument. In reality, the battle for 111 1st Street likely began several years early with a low, yet audible rumbling. In the late 1990s, just as the city devised and later passed the WALDO overlay plan and as 111 1st Street and Jersey City itself seemed to radiate a tractor beam for artists priced out of Manhattan and the more convenient parts of Brooklyn, New Gold Equities methodically began to weaken the foothold of the artists in the warehouse. The expired leases of artists were not renewed as early as 1999.\textsuperscript{110} By the winter of 2001, artists were not granted annual leases but month-to-month leases, a contract far more beneficial to property owners than tenants.\textsuperscript{111} New Gold Equities also filed a legal challenge to an expansion of the WALDO ordinance---a fact that had gone unreported during the spat of enthusiastic and positive articles on the new arts district.\textsuperscript{112} The ownership of 111 1st Street specifically attacked the provision mandating fifty-one percent (51\%) of warehouse space in the district for artists’ studios.\textsuperscript{113}

These facts alone fail to explain the seemingly sudden interest of the landlord in the goings-on of 111 1st Street, his moves to curtail the number of artists residing or working out of the former warehouse, and his apparent worry over the city’s interference in his management of the property. Several other events---although seemingly ancillary---might have well contributed to this changing position of New Gold Equities and the growingly volatile dynamic between the ownership and the artists. A source interviewed by the author suggested as much:

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{110}] William Rodwell, \textit{Timeline: 111 First Street, Jersey City, NJ: 1866-2005}.
\item[\textsuperscript{113}] David Danzig, “Creative Curfew?” \textit{Jersey Journal}, December 10, 2001. The initial reporting on the WALDO ordinance in the late 1990s makes no mention of this mandate. Indeed, this mandate was not written into the original municipal ordinance. This change appears to have been legislated in early 2001. However, the author cannot find a specific date or the exact details regarding this substantial expansion of the original WALDO ordinance.
\end{itemize}
Big factors seemed minor … Stuff at the edges, just as interesting …

What was the “stuff at the edges”? What were these interactions, relationships, or events unnoticed by the local press that altered the life of 111 1st Street?

In one possibly related event in 1999, the city government demolished a loading dock behind 110 1st Street in order to widen 2nd Street and make that corridor and the adjacent properties more attractive to development and prospective business. Presumably, eminent domain was utilized to undertake this action. In addition to 111 1st Street, New Gold Equities owned 110 1st Street. The ownership claimed that the city acted illegally in their demolition of the loading dock and initiated legal action against the city. Ultimately, New Gold Equities won the court case and was awarded approximately $5,000,000 for the wrongful destruction of its property. This settlement greatly exceeded the combined purchase prices of both 110 1st Street and 111 1st Street by New Gold Equities in bankruptcy court in 1991. This event more than suggests a strain---if not outright antagonism---budding between the ownership and the city government.

Moreover, this event---most likely not isolated---complicates the state-sponsored model of gentrification as espoused by Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith. In the earlier stages of this gentrification model, gentrification is a process largely undertaken by individual residents, property owners, and investors, often without the knowledge and assistance of government officials and institutions, banks, or corporate firms. As an area becomes more desirable and, thus, more financially lucrative and reliable in the terms of profits, large, corporate bodies such

---

114 Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
115 William Rodwell, *Timeline: 111 First Street, Jersey City, NJ: 1866-2005*. Unfortunately, the author has yet to locate another source to corroborate these facts. Nonetheless, their inclusion is integral to examining the motivations of the building’s ownership.
as national and international banks underwrite investment or directly initiate projects in the given area. Then, local and national builders and real estate firms swoop in and seize control of the formerly small-scale or grassroots gentrification and transform the process into a massive, large-scale, and formalized economic project. Such a change in the temperament, level, and dynamic of the process is sponsored or even subsidized by the government at the local, state, or even federal levels. This recent and contemporary phase of gentrification demonstrates a relationship between capital and the state, a shared goal of spatial remapping, and an effective demographic remaking of a neighborhood, area, or entire locality.\(^{116}\) At the outset, such a process did not appear to happen in the case of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street.

The seizure and demolition of the loading dock of 110 1\(^{st}\) Street by the Jersey City government strongly hinted at a fracturing in the relationship between New Gold Equities and the city. The city acted in this manner to widen 2\(^{nd}\) Street for prospective and current retailers in a recently constructed shopping center. This decision reveals that the city was deciding upon a development policy---at least, in the vicinity of 110 1\(^{st}\) Street and 111 1\(^{st}\) Street---to make the land usage and zoning agreeable and welcoming to retail and chain stores, even if that policy negatively impacted private property owners. This occurrence also brings into question the nature of the relationship between the ownership of the buildings and the city. According to the gentrification theory advanced by Hackworth and Smith, the two parties should have been working in tandem to ensure whole scale reinvestment and redevelopment of the properties. This theoretical notion appears to be too simplistic when confronted with a specific series of events and a specific case study. This model of gentrification becomes increasingly suspect

---

when faced with the progressive conflict between the residents and the ownership of 111 1st Street. Finally, this clash between the city and the ownership demonstrated that New Gold Equities possessed the resources, capabilities, and the will to challenge the city and win. Again, this fact becomes increasingly important as the history of the building and its artists unfolds.

The relationship between the two parties at 111 1st Street underwent further tension in the election of a new mayoral administration in 2001. In 2001, Bret Schundler concluded his second and final term as mayor of Jersey City. Although supportive of culture and the arts, Schundler was a classic urban booster. The mayor’s office aimed to fashion a pro-business and pro-development environment within Jersey City and presented the municipal government as a willing partner in a local growth coalition. This general tenor altered with the election of Glenn Cunningham. A longtime figure in Jersey City and Hudson County politics, Cunningham ran his campaign on a populist platform and initially voiced support for 111 1st Street remaining an artists’ enclave. However, Cunningham’s position vis-à-vis 111 1st Street would become more complex and difficult.

***

Various residents alluded to questionable or illegal activities occurring within the halls and rooms of 111 1st Street: drug dealing and drug usage, prostitution, squatting, an immigration ring, a sadomasochistic dungeon, and extortion at the hands of the building manager and

---


118 The author initially developed this idea in an earlier seminar paper in which he presented the case for a historic and present growth coalition operating within Jersey City.

119 Interview with author, June 22, 2011. Cunningham briefly served as mayor from 2001-2004. His death of a massive heart attack in 2004 ushered in a special election won by the standing mayor, Jerramiah Healy. The author has not fully researched the career and policy positions of Cunningham and relied upon newspaper accounts and information provided by interviewed sources.
superintendent. Most of these activities seemed to contribute to the allure of the building as an outlaw bohemian environment and an alternative to mainstream society and culture; the memories and recollections of such behavior seemed essential to the nostalgia of the building and its community. This longing for grit and danger often exists as a key thematic ingredient to most narratives of arts communities and bohematics.  

A much more violent, although largely unknown, altercation might explain the sudden concern over the safety of 111 1st Street by the owner and management. Previous artists and residents hinted at a criminal element conducting business in the warehouse with the tacit approval and possible assistance of the building manager. An episode threatened to bring this explosive arrangement to the attention of the public and, more dangerously, law enforcement.

In 2000 or 2001, a fight erupted between two tenants of the building. One of the combatants—a Russian immigrant—seriously injured the other party, or as a former resident colorfully stated “beat the holy shit out of the guy.” In fact, the man suffered two broken legs as a result of the incident. The injured tenant threatened to sue New Gold Equities for a lack of security within the building. One source stated that the injured man had been tracking the activities of his Russian attacker. This man known as “Andre” was—if not a full-fledged member—reportedly engaged with the Russian mafia. The building manager would rent vacant space to Andre. In turn, Andre would sponsor Russian immigrants and lease the space to

121 Interview with author, June 24, 2011.
124 The author suspects that “Andre” is Andrei Doumler. The cited *Jersey Journal* article named Doumler as the suspect arrested in the assault and listed his profession as a web designer.
them. Whole Russian families began living in the building. More nefariously, Andre established
drug and prostitution rings in spaces within the warehouse. Presumably, Andre attacked and
injured the other tenant as a warning for him to keep quiet, mind his own business, and leave the
building. 125

This unnamed man failed to heed the very loud and brutal message issued by the Russian
gangster. On July 4, 2001, Andre and at least one other criminal found the man and his
girlfriend in the halls of 111 1st Street and proceeded to make good on his past threat. Both the
man and his girlfriend were savagely beaten by the alleged mobsters. According to a news
report on the incident:

The [girlfriend] suffered a broken arm and nose, smashed
teeth, a cut to a bone in her left knee and crushed vocal
cords as she tried to protect her friend when the pair was
jumped … [She] was hurled down the stairs and her friend
suffered a serious brain injury. 126

Andre was arrested for the assault and beatings but was never indicted.

The details of this crime alone should have prompted a cursory investigation by local
authorities and by any responsive owner. The female victim was Katalin Pota, a minor actress,
who played the maid of Tony Soprano in the successful cable television drama The Sopranos.
This fact attracted local and national media attention to the crime and to 111 1st Street. The
artists, mindful of their relationship with the building’s management and ownership and, more
importantly, desirous to continue living and working at the warehouse refrained from speaking to
the press and allowing themselves to become entangled in the brouhaha. 127 Nonetheless, the

---

125 Interview with author, June 24, 2011.
127 Interview with author, June 24, 2011.
attack and the subsequent spotlight shined on the building by the press might have contributed to New Gold Equities’ sudden attention to the physical security of 111 1st Street and the supposed personal security of its residents.

Finally, the emphasis on security followed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. This fact and its influence cannot be adequately judged or measured; however, it must be considered when weighing the worsening atmosphere of 111 1st Street. Several former residents or individuals intimate with the building mentioned September 11, 2001 during conversations with the author.\footnote{Interview with author, June 20, 2011; interview with author, June 26, 2011} Purportedly, Lloyd Goldman narrowly escaped death in the World Trade Center due his late arrival to a meeting.\footnote{William Rodwell, \textit{Timeline: 111 First Street, Jersey City, NJ: 1866-2005}.} Any examination of 111 1st Street must take into account the widespread fear and sometimes paranoia---rational and irrational, justified and unjustified---pervading all segments of the society immediately after the attacks and lasting for several years.

The events detailed above formed a broader context and environment within which 111 1st Street existed. Inevitably, other elements and factors played into drama of the building and its residents and artists; however, the ones examined feature prominently and are more widely known. Ultimately, no historical or social event, moment, or even figure can ever be fully understood, but the passage of time, dedicated research, and chance discovery might add further complexity and richness to their interpretation and fixtures in the larger conscience and the scholastic and popular imagination.
Chapter 3:

111 1st Street: The Battle for Its Future

The threatened curfew and its damaging implications continued to alarm the artists and residents, increasing their worries and fears over the intentions of the ownership, their livelihoods and callings, and their very status and future in 111 1st Street and Jersey City. In 2000 or 2001, the residents formed a tenants’ organization to increase their bargaining power with New Gold Equities and to present a unified voice in such dealings and, possibly, to the local media, government, and public. One former tenant provided more detail:

In 2001, while I was busy curating my first art exhibition, we began hearing ominous rumors that things at 111 could be changing. We heard the landlord … was thinking about demolishing the building and throwing us out. Our response was to form a very loose "tenant's [sic] association" to see if we could thwart the landlord's plans. When the rumors increased, we got more serious and held elections for officers … For the next 4.5 years, we did all we could to get public opinion on our side, obtain the support of the local politicians …

The tenants’ organization expressed a determination to the fight the proposed curfew. This marked the first outright battle in the war over the future of 111 1st Street.

131 Interview with the author, June 26, 2011. The actual date of the formation of the tenants’ organization appears as both 2000 and 2001 in documents and interviews.
Although the management and the ownership of 111 1st Street originally warned of a tenants curfew in October 2001, they now seemed to retreat from their initial stance, explaining that a curfew stood as one of multiple options being explored to increase the security of the building. However, their determination to impose a strict and---according to the artists---harsh and punitive curfew seemed to arise again several weeks later. On November 21, 2001, a set of rules and regulations was distributed to all the tenants throughout the building. These rules and regulations explicitly spelled out when 111 1st Street would operate and function as a commercial structure: the building would be open from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays and it would be closed on Sundays and holidays. The new hours would go into effect on December 10, 2001. Moreover, the memo warned:

> Any individual found in the building after Dec. 10, after the building is closed to the public, will be trespassing and therefore subject to arrest.\(^\text{133}\)

Upon initially hearing of the curfew in October, the artists voiced worry, emphasizing their need to work at unusual times and hours. Many of the residents maintained second and full-time jobs to supplement their lifestyle and vocation and they relied upon hours in the evening, weekends, and the occasional holiday to work on their art. Such a rigid operating schedule for 111 1st Street would obviously limit their studio time. Many of the long-term tenants first signed leases in the building with the guarantee of twenty-four hour and seven-day access to the building. Now, the management and ownership no longer limited itself to constricting the hours of operation and effectively the ability of the artists to work: it raised the threat of arrest and implicitly the termination of leases and residencies upon a tenant violating


the newly published rules and regulations.\footnote{This facet of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street would be an interesting or maybe a rather simple study for a scholar of real estate law. How can commercial contracts be summarily and radically altered by one party, in this instance, the property owner? The author would like to obtain a copy of a tenant’s lease and approach a law professor or a practicing attorney with this question.} By posting such a memo, the ownership fundamentally shifted its argument with the tenants. One artist labeled the curfew and its accompanying threat as a “frontal assault.”\footnote{David Danzig, “Creative Curfew,” \textit{Jersey Journal}, December 10, 2001.}

By late 2001, the artists of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and the tenants organization approached the city government and pressed it to support them in the fight over the curfew and its harmful impact not only on their livelihood and position in the warehouse but on the entire WALDO district as envisioned and codified by municipal legislation and zoning. The Jersey City corporate counsel received a copy of the original memo circulated by the management of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and remarked that the memo “caused concern in the [Cunningham] administration.”\footnote{Prescott Tolk, “Artists Told They Can Only Access Their Lofts at Certain Times,” \textit{Jersey City Reporter}, December 2, 2001.} Whether the memo was provided by the management or the artists remains an unanswered question.

While the tenants’ organization began to maneuver the channels of government to broker a solution between the residents and the ownership, some artists decided upon a more flagrant and confrontational stance. On the night of December 10, 2011, when the curfew was to officially be implemented, a group of artists flaunted the new policy and threw a nighttime party:

We’re going to throw a party … It starts at 10:00 p.m.
Monday night. There should be more than 100 people there. Let ‘em arrest all of us.\footnote{David Danzig, “Creative Curfew,” \textit{Jersey Journal}, December 10, 2001.}

Such expressed contempt for the proposed operating policy for 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and the authority of the ownership most likely did not assist in the nascent negotiations between the tenants’
organization and the ownership and did not place the artists in a good position with the city. This lack of discipline within the ranks of the artists might have served as a dark harbinger of the course of the struggle for the building and its ultimate outcome. However, aside from the ability and the willingness to protest, did the average artist of 111 1st Street possess any other strategic resources?

Just before Christmas 2001, the tenants’ organization accompanied by their lawyer and representatives of New Gold Equities met at city hall with mayoral officials. At this meeting, these officials informed both parties that the Cunningham administration and, in effect, the government of Jersey City, supported the arts community and the artists of 111 1st Street and urged both sides to amicably resolve the problems with the operating hours and security of the warehouse.\textsuperscript{138} The attorney for New Gold Equities described the meeting as “positive” and noted that “everything [was] on the table.”\textsuperscript{139}

Interesting enough, even at this early stage in the battle for what the artists would characterize as the soul of 111 1st Street, the residents perceived that the essence of the fight was for the overall character and future of their own building as well as the surrounding warehouse district.

Several blocks away to the east, the Jersey City waterfront---a former shipping powerhouse---was undergoing massive redevelopment (See: Map 2). Glittering office towers and architecturally bland residential buildings sprouted with the regularity and fecundity of summertime crops. To the west, the brownstone neighborhoods clustered around city hall and the

\textsuperscript{138} William Rodwell, \textit{Timeline: 111 First Street, Jersey City, NJ: 1866-2005}.
Grove Street PATH were experiencing their own blend of gentrification.\textsuperscript{140} The warehouse district, rechristened WALDO, preserved the few remaining physical relics of Jersey City’s industrial heyday and existed almost as an archaeological site of a way of life and a way of work dimming in memory and history.\textsuperscript{141} The artists viewed themselves as fighting to save these remnants from the wrecking ball and the insatiable forces of “progress”:

It’s like the ‘Last of the Mohicans’ around here … The developers and the yuppies are circling the wagons, and I guess we’ll see what happens.\textsuperscript{142}

This language deserves cursory examination. The imagery and words associated with the American frontier chosen to describe the gentrification process unfolding in Jersey City match the linguistic observations noted by Neil Smith in his studies of the East Village.\textsuperscript{143} Nonetheless, the meaning subtly shifted. In the case of Jersey City, the artists “settled” in the “frontier” long before the developers and the more affluent classes appeared on the landscape. The artists---not a minority or impoverished population---were the Indians or the savages to be rooted out, and the developers and the affluent classes were the settlers staking claims on the land and cultivating it for maximum and “proper” usage. However, in exchanges and interviews with the author, the

\textsuperscript{140} The gentrification of downtown Jersey City is worth noting. Although slow and fitful, the downtown gentrification exhibits elements and patterns of gentrification noted in the traditional literature. Downtown Jersey City best resembles Park Slope, Brooklyn on a smaller scale. Thankfully, the downtown neighborhoods have avoided the “financification” that beset Brooklyn Heights and other neighborhoods long ago marked for gentrification. Loretta Lees, “Super-Gentrification: the Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City,” Urban Studies 40, no. 12 (November 2003): 2487-2509. The downtown neighborhoods merit a study of their own and will not be further discussed in this piece.

\textsuperscript{141} The fascination produced by industrial structures and industrial decay deserves an exhaustive study and intellectual exploration. The author would like to further research the link between such physical spaces and their associated “aura” and their relationship with artists and creative individuals. Also, the placement of industry and manufacturing in the public imagination merits genuine study. 2012 presidential candidates from both political parties---specifically President Barack Obama and ex-senator Rick Santorum---argued that a restored and reinvigorating manufacturing base promises a steady and healthy economy and middle-class for America. A cursory glance at such statement does seem to hold some truth. The economy of Germany rests upon a vibrant export-driven industry and has weathered the ongoing economic recession much better than other developed economies.


former residents and artists described themselves as “pioneers.”

One individual intimate with 111 1st Street lamented the contemporary lack of such “pioneers” in Jersey City and other urban environments:

Someone needs to be a pioneer. Pioneers crossed this country. People need to take a chance. But, people just want to stick in their own little area now.

This self-identification as both “native” and “pioneer” is an interesting paradox and stands as unique to the context of 111 1st Street and Jersey City.

In studies of other artistic communities, artists flocked to a declining or dilapidated neighborhood of a city and reinvigorated it. In this process, other populations and businesses are displaced due to a combination of zoning changes, rising rents, and escalating property values. Both the influx of artists and creative types and later public policy gradually yet effectively pushed out industry from SoHo in Manhattan and from Williamsburg in Brooklyn. In the East Village and Lower East Side of Manhattan, ethnic, immigrant, and minority populations suffered the pressures of gentrification spurred by the original artistic “pioneers.” The discovery of Wicker Park by Chicago’s artists led to the diminishment of Eastern Europeans and Puerto Ricans in that neighborhood. These are only a handful of documented examples, and an exhaustive list of such neighborhoods and their changing ethnic and racial dynamic and histories

---

144 Interview with author, June 8, 2011; interview with author, June 26, 2011; interview with author, June 29, 2011; interview with author, July 19, 2011.
145 Interview with author, June 8, 2011.
would demand more space than allowable in this discussion. (Admittedly, gentrification delivers benefits to the members of such groups remaining in gentrified neighborhoods, and individuals have expressed as much.) One consistent fact exists in all such studies: the artists are inarguably “pioneers” and typically the first wave of “pioneers.”

The case of 111 1st Street complicates this accepted narrative of gentrification and corroborates the theory that all gentrification is partially local in nature. The artists and residents of the building viewed themselves as “pioneers” of Jersey City, specifically of the collection of warehouses surrounding 111 1st Street. Unlike most artistic colonies detailed in gentrification literature, 111 1st Street did not initiate the displacement of other urban residents. 111 1st Street sat in a purely commercial or industrial zone of Jersey City. No cold-water flats or block upon block of railroad apartment buildings were located in the vicinity of 111 1st Street. As described earlier, several industrial tenants might have existed in the building or in the area at the beginning of the influx of artists. (Unfortunately, the author has not been able to locate any information on the number or the nature of such businesses.)

Within a decade, these “pioneers” of 111 1st Street became the “natives” or “savages” to be pushed off their land by a more affluent population and the machinations of developers. How does the usage of this language and imagery by the artists and former residents inform the study and conceptualization of gentrification? In the instance of 111 1st Street and Jersey City, the

---

147 Lance Freeman, *There Goes the ‘Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006). Freeman challenges the perception that minorities lose and lose big in gentrified neighborhoods. He argues that gentrification presents some tangible benefits—better safety, cleaner streets, more shopping choices—to the original inhabitants of neighborhoods. His study largely centers on Harlem, Manhattan and Fort Green, Brooklyn.

148 This was also the case with the redevelopment of the Jersey City waterfront, now called the Gold Coast. Aside from probable vagrants and criminals, the waterfront housed no residents.

149 An idea for future research would be to attempt to track down the businesses operating in 111 1st Street and within the area at the time of the movement of artists into the warehouse. Tax records and city directories might provide some of the necessary data. This would likely prove to be a laborious and painstaking research task; thus, the author decided not to pursue it for this discussion.
artists were the unruly population, the undeserving poor, or the suspect group scaring investors and the wealthy away from the urban landscape. This descriptive language utilized by the artists and their self-identification question the artists’ status within the gentrification narrative and popular imagination as a privileged group. Artists as a group possess limited funds, influence, and means. In these aspects, they resemble the working-class and the poor---demographic groups which are often victims of gentrification. However, unlike the working-class and the poor, artists have a high degree of education and appreciation of culture. Additionally, artists generally express a radical set of political beliefs and a socially and sexually libertarian philosophy, setting them well apart from the middle-class and upper-class. This places them in strange, almost neither-nor position. Artists straddle distinctive elements and classes within American society. The vocabulary and language applied to the narrative and scholarship of gentrification support such an observation---at the very least in the instance of 111 1st Street and Jersey City.

Although the battle lines between the artists and the ownership of 111 1st Street were stiffening and becoming clearer, both parties appeared to be negotiating in good faith in the later days of December 2001 and in January 2002. Following the suggestion of city officials, a representative from New Gold Equities held a meeting with members of the tenants’ organization in January 2002 to discuss the prickly and difficult security issues. The tenants’ organization presented several solutions to address and partially solve the legitimate security concerns of the ownership: an intercom system, a monitored elevator, and an artists review

---


panel. This panel would fully vet all rental applications and ensure that all future tenants were indeed practicing and professional artists—-and not floaters, partiers, addicts, criminals, or others simply sniffing around for cheap rent. (As noted earlier, the building management was likely complicit in much of the illicit activity within the 111 1st Street. The building supervisor would rent vacant units to various parties, presumably without the knowledge of New Gold Equities.)

New Gold Equities largely ignored these recommendations by the tenants’ association. Instead, building management installed push-bar alarms on the two primary doors leading to the main elevators of 111 1st Street. Presumably, these alarms would be turned on during the curfew hours imposed upon the residents and the building and as established in the memo distributed to the residents in late 2001; therefore, any resident or visitor attempting to break the curfew would trigger the alarm system and alert a private security company or the Jersey City police. Hours after the initial installation of the alarm system, the push bars were torn off the doors and thrown on the floor. The building management reinstalled the push bar alarms several times, but the pattern repeated itself. Although no tenants explicitly admitted to the sabotage of the alarm system, the implication existed that the residents perceived the vandalism as an act of protest against the management and the ownership. Soon thereafter, New Gold Equities stopped enforcing the curfew.

While the residents and ownership of 111 1st Street attempted to forge an uneasy détente, the Jersey City government under the Cunningham administration forged policy favoring artists, the full implementation of the WALDO ordinance, and maintaining 111 1st Street as an arts hub. Although the city passed the WALDO ordinance in 2000 with much fanfare, press coverage, and

---

153 Interview with author, June 26, 2011; interview with author, July 19, 2011.
goodwill among the cultural and arts communities, little movement occurred toward realistically
developing and, more importantly, securing the area as a functioning and vibrant arts district.

This problem continues into the present. Articles in the local press and comments on
local message boards often bemoan the lack of support for artists in the city’s arts district. In
fact, several sources interviewed by the author noted this glaring discrepancy between the stated
policy of the city government, the promotion of realtors, and the reality of the neighborhood
itself. One source bitterly remarked:

So called Powerhouse Arts District [formerly known as WALDO], that we worked so hard to create, is just
another luxury high rise condo development whose
spaces are not user friendly to artists.155

Another artist offered a more savage remark:

[The] only artists were exterminated …156

In contrast to the gloomy and defeatist opinions of the former residents of 111 1st Street,
government officials still argue that the arts are integral to the city’s cultural, social, and
economic future and describe the city as a partner and an advocate for the arts.157 As late as
February 2011, the city voted to landmark the warehouses in the area surrounding (the now
former) 111 1st Street, reflecting a dedication to preserving the industrial architectural heritage
and carving out a space for artists and creative industries.158

---

155 Interview with author, July 27, 2011.
156 Interview with author, June 18, 2011.
157 Interview with the author, June 8, 2011; interview with author, September 7, 2011.
158 In the spirit of full disclosure, the author voted for such ordinances in his position as a historical preservation
commissioner for Jersey City. This vote occurred several years after the demolition of 111 1st Street. In his
Amid the rising tension between the artists and the ownership, the Cunningham administration seriously attempted to craft a policy to manage the WALDO ordinance and settle the future of the area and 111 1st Street. Cunningham sought and secured a $110,000 grant from the state of New Jersey to contract the Urban Land Institute to interview residents and businesses about the stalled WALDO neighborhood and produce a feasibility study detailing possible and realistic plans for the area. The Urban Land Institute is a non-profit dedicated to the “open exchange of ideas … to creat[e] better places” and “exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development.”

Mayor Cunningham justified the grant and the study by the Urban Land Institute:

> While the formulation of plans for the district have been handled in-house, we have sought outside counsel to provide an unbiased view of the feasibility of our plans for the WALDO area.

The city hoped that an outside study published by a third-party disengaged and independent from the political squabbles of Jersey City and with no economic or personal interests in the interpretation and execution of the WALDO ordinance might neutralize the issue of the district—and, possibly 111 1st Street—and allow all involved parties to accept the municipal policy and finally move forward with needed development and investment.

The Urban Land Institute launched its study with a cocktail hour held in the lobby of one of the newly constructed office towers along the Hudson River waterfront, hoping to introduce

---


the Institute to various constituencies in the city and to build a sense of goodwill around its project. Participants in the study included artists, developers, planners, transportation officials, and municipal officers, including Mayor Cunningham. During the launch party, the Institute’s members assured their guests that the final report would be neutral in its methodology and its conclusion. At the party, an artists’ advocacy group distributed shirts to the Urban Land Institute advisors. This caused one guest, the former mayor, Gerald McCann, to remark that the conclusions and suggested recommendations of the study were “pre-ordained.” McCann offered a cynical, yet surprisingly insightful comment concerning 111 1st Street and the entire WALDO district:

This was proposed six years ago and what do we have after six years? Nothing. If you want affordable housing you have to subsidize it.  

McCann was speaking about the mandate that fifty-one percent of the housing units in WALDO was to be reserved for practicing artists. No subsidy was written into the original plan. This lack of financial support for the arts and artists was a concern often voiced during the lifespan of 111 1st Street and it continues to be raised in Jersey City. The municipal government under various administrations declared the integral position of fertile arts and culture communities within Jersey City, yet the government offered a tiny amount in terms of financing and support and wavered in its commitment in the face of developers and real estate interests. However, McCann’s comments were rooted in his political rivalry with Mayor Cunningham and his currying of favor with real estate interests—not in a spirit of altruism toward artists or in attempt

---

162 Jason Fink, “Focus on the Future of WALDO,” *Jersey Journal*, March 6, 2002. As noted earlier, McCann is a notorious and long-time local politician. In 2002, he was shopping himself around as a Congressional candidate. 
to position himself as a stronger advocate for them. Years earlier, McCann defeated Cunningham in Cunningham’s first run for mayor and now McCann signaled his support for the interests of large property owners and developers over those of artists.

The Urban Land Institute released its report on March 10, 2002. The report concluded that Jersey City should develop an arts district with a combination of market-rate and subsidized housing, galleries, performance spaces, restaurants, and retail. Coincidentally, arts proponents and the 111 1st Street artists had been promoting such a development plan for some period of time, even preceding the codification of the WALDO district in 2000. However, the Urban Land Institute offered an ambitious and optimistic strategy for the city.$^{164}$

In this plan, the historic Hudson & Manhattan Railroad Powerhouse listed on the National Register of Historic Places and serving as the eastern border and landmark of the WALDO district would anchor the neighborhood and be redeveloped into a multi-use structure and arts and entertainment destination (See: Figure 7). The Powerhouse, constructed in 1909, once generated the electricity for the PATH trains linking New York and New Jersey. In 2002, it stood as a hulking, potent symbol of the postindustrial landscape of Jersey City. The report urged the city to scrap WALDO as the name of the area and rechristen it “the Powerhouse Arts District” in order to link it symbolically with the industrial centerpiece of the neighborhood.$^{165}$ Furthermore, the report tallied up the infrastructure resources of the PATH trains and Hudson-Bergen Light Rail and enviable demographics---35,000 employees and 80,000 residents---near the district. Finally, the report noted the high concentration of artists in the New York City

---


$^{165}$ Interview with the author, June 26, 2011. This would prove to be the only prescription embraced and executed by the city. This remains a contentious issue for residents in the now Powerhouse Arts District.
metropolitan, especially Hudson County and Jersey City (5,000 and 1,600 respectively in 2002). As noted earlier, the development strategy of the Urban Land Institute advocated mixed-use housing to preserve the arts community and to ensure that future artists might be able to afford to live and work in the area. The Urban Land Institute supported this statement by detailing the modest-income levels of artists in the metropolitan area (72 percent of artists in 2002 earned $35,000). Such a small income would place most housing and studios beyond the reach of the average professional artist. Although he presented himself as backer of the arts and 111 1st Street, Mayor Cunningham failed to appear at the public presentation of the Urban Land Institute’s report.\footnote{John Petrick, “Study Boosts District for Arts, Housing,” \textit{Jersey Journal}, March 11, 2002.}

The involvement and the report of the Urban Land Institute adds another wrinkle to the position of 111 1st Street within the gentrification narrative. Although a registered non-profit often pressing for admirable development policies---smart growth and mass transportation, for example---the Urban Land Institute is a creature of the real estate industry and a partner in the urban growth coalition. Its report was embraced by the local arts community and the municipal government, but the property owners within the Powerhouse Arts District neé WALDO took an adverse stance toward the report. Specifically, New Gold Equities pressed forward with its lawsuit over the WALDO ordinance and its restrictions over the development of 110 1st Street and 111 1st Street. This difference highlights some real cracks within the coherence of the urban growth coalition theory and the supply-side school of gentrification theory.

Both theories paint the processes of urban development and gentrification with broad, generalizing strokes, often categorizing various institutions, businesses, partners, and figures as a monolithic bloc with an agreed set of goals. Essentially, full acceptance of these theories might
very well lead to an absence of nuance and a denial of murky, grey areas in the interpretation of
gentrification and the capturing of specific, local narratives. In reality, any particular
gentrification movement is initiated, strengthened, abetted, and, if successful, finally cemented
by a unique coalition of factions and interests. The particulars of discrete a geographic location,
its inhabitants, and its economic, social, and cultural vectors are ignored if interpreted through
fixed lenses of a theory or an ideology. The supply model of gentrification remains especially
susceptible of such rigidity: the recent advances of this model by Smith and Hackworth are
especially guilty of such thought. The urban growth coalition---roughly paralleling the
demand model of gentrification, yet surprisingly undervalued, if not ignored by gentrification
scholarship---lumps together various factions as a coherent body working toward a singular goal
of development, growth, or gentrification, as well. Such critiques do not question the value of
the supply model of gentrification or the urban growth coalition: both offer invaluable and
innovative insights into the structure of political coalitions, political economics, and, of course,
gentrification. However, both theories cannot sufficiently and satisfactorily explain every instance
of gentrification. The tension among various participants (the municipal government, the Urban
Land Institute, and property owners and developers), often viewed as natural partners in supply-
style gentrification and the urban growth coalitions, in the case of 111 1st Street and Jersey City
draws further attention to the fissures in the above theoretical structures.

---

Following the release of the Urban Land Institute report, 111 1st Street garnered little coverage from the local media for the rest of 2002. After much fanfare and public commentary, none of the recommendations presented by the Urban Land Institution appeared to gain any traction or initiate any legitimate policy discussions within the municipal government. Additionally, the bickering between the tenants and the ownership of 111 1st Street appeared to abate in 2002. Scant anecdotes or evidence offer a reason for this temporary lull in the battle for the building.

In November 2002, 111 1st Street gained the unwelcomed attention of city officials after a fire broke out in the studio of two artists on the warehouse’s fifth floor in the early morning of November 2. As a result of the sprinkler system set off by the blaze, sixteen studios were flooded, many artists’ work and belongings were destroyed, and the building and its studios experienced water damage. The artists who accidentally started the fire suffered severe burns. Following the blaze, inspectors from the Jersey City Fire Department visited the building on a regular basis and attempted to prove that artists were living in their studios. As stated earlier, tenants were expressly prohibited from living in 111 1st Street as the structure was zoned for commercial usage. However, the ownership, the city, and the tenants played a game of mutual self-denial: all parties knew that many tenants were living in their studios, and the local media printed articles stating this fact. Nonetheless, the fire and the real threat that the flames could have jumped to nearby buildings and could have caused the deaths of illegal tenants in 111 1st Street forced the city to act and to instruct the Fire Department to exercise enforcement.

169 In fact, the author could locate no articles published about 111 1st Street for the remainder of the year. One could argue that this does not prove the absence of important events and happenings, just a lack of attention and public discourse.
The artists took umbrage with this action and perceived it as an intrusion by the city and by extension New Gold Equities. In reality, the city could have levied heavy fines against New Gold Equities if any artists were officially determined to be living in the building, and the building itself was likely not up to current building and fire code standards, especially for habitation. A source articulately placed the public safety issue in perspective:

If a warehouse in the Heights [a largely residential neighborhood in the northernmost part of Jersey City] was filled with undocumented workers, it would be shut down in five minutes.  

Meanwhile, the temporary truce between the ownership and the artists continued--- in public, at least, into early 2003. During this period, the artists expressed more concern over the health of the local arts scene and the viability of the Powerhouse Arts District as an art nexus than their status vis-à-vis 111 1st Street. The general optimism and energy previously emanating from 111 1st Street and Jersey City seemed unfocused and weakening. A news story embraced this theme:

[T]he buzz was that this could be Jersey’s answer to SoHo … It never quite happened …

An artist based in 111 1st Street echoed such a sentiment:

There are tons of artists here. The potential is all here. Now we just need to connect the dots,

---

171 Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
172 For the sake of clarity and simplicity, the author will refer to the area surrounding 111 1st Street as the Powerhouse House Arts District. After the report by the Urban Land Institute, the city, the property owners, the press, and public dropped the WALDO moniker and entitled the area the Powerhouse Arts District.
Another artist remembered that critics from the *New York Times* would journey across the Hudson River to review an opening or a show in 111 1st Street or a gallery in downtown Jersey City in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Now, many of those galleries were closed, and the press coverage had largely disappeared. The artist once thought:

> Wow. This [111 1st Street and Jersey] is really going to take off. But it’s sputtering now.\(^{175}\)

In 2003, Jersey City continued to attract the back offices of many financial and banking institutions, and many of those businesses sponsored annual studio tours and displayed work by local artists in their lobby spaces, yet this infusion of jobs and an influx of a more affluent population did not coalesce into a community of art collectors or art connoisseurs. This problem continues into the present:

> People from New York City don’t come to see Jersey City artists. Good artists have to show in cities …\(^{176}\)

Why were the cheer and headiness surrounding 111 1st Street and the local arts scene siphoned off at that time? As several sources interviewed by the author mentioned, the arts scene in Williamsburg, Brooklyn percolated roughly at the same time as 111 1st Street in Jersey City in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. By the early 2000s, the bohemian image of

---


\(^{176}\) Interview with author, June 4, 2011.
Williamsburg had spread beyond the borders of the metropolitan area and began seeping into the collective imagination of self-identified creative and counter-culture types. Williamsburg was the ascendant bohemia; Jersey City remained in stasis, if not decline. Also, the regional and the United States economy were far from booming in 2003: before the recession of 2008, the economy under the presidency of George W. Bush was infamous for the weakest growth in postwar United States. At the local level, the vacillating policy and erratic support for the arts by the Jersey City government could not have helped. Ultimately, no scholarship can ever prove why one bohemia explodes while another withers away. A certain intangible, organic element or compound exists in the growth of an artistic community, just as in the creation of art itself.

Later in 2003, the energies of the artists shifted away from the overall health of the arts scene and returned to their hold on the building itself. New Gold Equities began raising the rents of artists at an unspecified point that year. The exact date of the rent increases remains uncertain. Since the residents held individual leases (some of the leases were month-to-month; others were annual), the rent changes most likely did not fall on a uniform date. All the tenants received notices of rent increases ranging from 50% to 200% by September 2003, and the local press began reporting on the increases in February 2004. Interestingly enough, New Gold Equities delivered notices of rent increases to the tenants in late 2002, but the Cunningham administration quickly intervened and forced the owner to retract the announcements. A source elaborated on the seemingly sporadic, but obvious strategic move by the ownership to periodically threaten astronomical hikes in the monthly rents of the artists of 111 1st Street:

---

177 The author remembers first visiting Williamsburg, Brooklyn from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in early 2003. His hosts, friends of his now wife, touted all the great music clubs, bookstores, cafes, and art exhibition spaces in Williamsburg. The author remained skeptical. Time has humbled him. The gentrification or even financification of Williamsburg deserves its own serious study. The author looks forward to reading Robert Anasi, The Last Bohemia: Scenes from the Life of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, which is slated for publication in August 2012.

Goldman would double, triple the rents. The mayor’s office would pressure him. Goldman would back off and then again raise rents a few weeks later. War of attrition against the city and the artists …

The above is revealing and direct in its meaning. New Gold Equities and Lloyd Goldman pursued a clever, tested, and often successful strategy of property owners and moneyed interests in the exploitation of land and buildings in gentrifying or gentrified areas and neighborhoods: regularly escalate the rents on long-standing and low-paying tenants, frustrate those tenants with legal tactics, retreat if pressed by government offices or officials, and then return to the original plan with a steady, savage determination. The tenants will eventually vacate, leaving the building empty and ripe for redevelopment and a massive return on the initial investment. In the case of 111 1st Street, New Gold Equities perceived its back-and-forth with the artists and, to lesser degree, with the city as a component in a forward-thinking plan. The artists might get discouraged and they might even win a few rounds, but, ultimately, New Gold Equities possessed an enviable and seemingly infinite amount of resources in terms of funds, personnel, and legal and financial expertise. In the long run, the ownership believed that it would win.

However, the sudden and dramatic rent raises attracted the attention of the municipal government and local politicians. Assemblyman Louis Manzo voiced strong support for the artists of 111 1st Street:

> How can you allow 200 percent rent increases? … The approach of having an arts district has been a plus for the city, but one thing you need for an arts district is artists.

---

179 Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
Manzo vowed to research New Jersey state law and hoped to find a method to resolve the rent issue in favor of the artists. Nonetheless, 111 1st Street was technically a commercial structure, and its residents were legally commercial tenants; this allowed the ownership to skirt rent control laws, and the tenants lacked their protection.\textsuperscript{181}

The head of the Division of Cultural Affairs of Jersey City contributed the growth of the arts in Jersey City directly to the concentration of artists in 111 1st Street and seemed confused by the actions of the ownership:

\begin{quote}
[Goldman] should be proud. He’s got some of the best known professional artists in the tri-state area.\textsuperscript{182}
\end{quote}

Mayor Cunningham had lobbied the owner to refrain from such large increases in rents and had requested that the owner hammer out a permanent resolution with the artists; nonetheless, as the tenor grew shriller between the parties, Cunningham felt more public pressure to address the matter. Specifically, Cunningham was forced to publically disavow a past primary supporter and fundraiser of his 2001 mayoral bid and 2003 state senate bid. At one point in the increasingly public fight over 111 1st Street and, to lesser degree, the development ordinance for the Powerhouse Arts District, New Gold Equities contracted Matt Burns to represent them in their suit with the city government. Cunningham released a public relations statement in which

\textsuperscript{181} New Jersey is a strong tenant state. Unfortunately, the tenants could take only limited advantage of the state policy and laws concerning tenant-landlord rights.

he expressed his disagreement with Burns over 111 1st Street and “that he would try to help the tenants.”

Talk of partial or full demolition of 111 1st Street also reemerged in 2003. This belief was rooted in far more than paranoid rumors and fears. In July 2003, the tenants’ association and several other interested parties met with Lloyd Goldman in his Manhattan offices. Goldman revealed computer-generated plans for both 110 1st Street and 111 1st Street. 110 1st Street would be completely demolished, and a seventeen-story apartment complex built on the site. The plans for 111 1st Street called for the demolition of a five-story section that bisected an inner courtyard and the iconic hundred-eighty foot chimney of 111 1st Street (See: Figure 9). The chimney of 111 1st Street was an architectural feature treasured by the artists and residents as an emblem of the past industrial might of the warehouse and Jersey City, and many sources interviewed by the author fondly remembered the chimney and its prominence in the physical memory of the building. After gutting the interior structures and courtyard of 111 1st Street, the proposed plan would have constructed a twenty-four story apartment building. All the artists and tenants would be forced to vacate the premises during the demolition and construction and allowed to return after the completion of the new structures and the renovation of the outer sections of the warehouse. Goldman asked the tenants’ association to accompany him in lobbying city hall to accept his plans for the two properties. The associated declined.

The year began with little discussion over the position of the artists in 111 1st Street and then quickly descended into a scramble set off by a cruel threat of a hefty increase in rents. As

---

183 Interview with author, June 22, 2011. Earlier in this project, the author noted his tenuous knowledge of the political career and history of the now deceased Glenn Cunningham. More research would be required to fully grasp and detail the relationship between Matt Burns and Glenn Cunningham. Goldman and New Gold Equities likely presumed that by placing Burns on their payroll they might gain the support of the Mayor and the city in their fight with the artists. The hiring of a favored legal firm to gain position or influence has been a well-known practice not only in Jersey City and Hudson County but in all political arenas. One could argue that this stands as another reason for strong and strict campaign finance laws.

2003 grew older, the artists confirmed their worst fears: New Gold Equities not only wanted them out of their studios and their homes---it connived to destroy their sanctuary from the world and their artistic Eden. The final battle in the war for the soul of 111 1st Street drew near.
Chapter 4:  
The Dying Days of a Dream

By the beginning of 2004, the tenants’ association and the artists had realized that Lloyd Goldman intended to develop 111 1st Street and that their community would become collateral damage in his plan for the building. Goldman, constructing a long-range strategy for the property, perceived time as a reliable tool. He even reminded the artists that “time [was] still on his side and he could wait out all politicians.”

As far as Goldman and his company New Gold Equities were concerned, the artists had served their usefulness: 111 1st Street, long a derelict parcel of land in a largely abandoned swath of a moribund city, was now a valuable property in a bustling neighborhood in a city undergoing a renaissance. The artists had played a crucial role in the transformation of the Powerhouse Arts District from a grim, slightly terrifying cluster of warehouses and crumbling industrial relics into a center of investment, construction, and new housing. A source connected to the county government clearly stated as much:

Would developers [have] invested in high rises and sold/rented to tenants if there was not the cachet of a local arts scene?

One past resident of 111 1st Street offered an eloquent and precise explanation of the process occurring at the building and within the surrounding area and other sizable areas of Jersey City:

The pattern is a familiar one to artists and real estate professionals. A bodega, a café, a bar, a restaurant, art galleries, maybe a frame shop, an art supply store, a hardware store. The neighborhood acquires an artsy cachet, becomes trendy, and the gentrification begins. Meanwhile artists, small businesses, local residents and

---

186 Interview with author, September 7, 2011.
landlords benefit from the new growth. At the other end of the cycle the real estate speculators take over, property values, taxes and rents begin to soar, and the artists are priced out of their own neighborhood, they leave for more affordable studio space and the cycle begins anew somewhere else.187

The artists had worked and lived in the building for over a decade and they clearly understood that they were unlikely to reap the benefits of the improving neighborhood. The artists were tenants: they had not purchased the building, slowly improved it over an arduous, often frustrating period of years and patiently waited for the neighborhood to better and for the superior shops and services to arrive. The artists rented studios for genuine work and for illegal living. The artists were outsiders, misfits, not respectable businessmen or buttoned-down homeowners. However, they felt that 111 1st Street was their home, their urban village, and their extended community. The cavernous, jumbled warehouse belonged as much to them---if not more---than to a corporate entity housed in a Manhattan office. To the artists, 111 1st Street was not a line on a spreadsheet or a canny investment: 111 1st Street was a magical place, a creative Eden, an epicenter of creation untainted by the cares and vagaries of the world. One artist described 111 1st Street as a “miracle, blessing, phenomenon” and believed that “something opened up and allowed us to be [there].”188 To put it succinctly, the artists had found and created something amazing in 111 1st Street, and they would not easily give it up. Although the odds were against them, the artists of 111 1st Street vowed to fight the ownership for the building. Really, what other choice did they have? Walking away from their colleagues, their friends, their homes, and their art was never an option.

---

187 Interview with author, June 30, 2011.
188 Interview with author, June 18, 2011.
The artists of 111 1st Street began to nurture their own plans to compete with the cookie-cutter proposal being shopped around by the building’s ownership in late 2003. The artists represented by the tenants’ association searched for an investor to purchase the building from New Gold Equities and redevelop it according to the Powerhouse Arts District guidelines while remaining cognizant of the needs and desires of the current tenants. Meanwhile, the artists designed their own blueprint to retrofit 111 1st Street. They pitched their plans to Mayor Cunningham and compared them to the computer model revealed by Goldman to the tenants’ association. Unfortunately for the artists, Cunningham expressed admiration for Goldman’s plans for the building, asking “How come nobody ever showed me these plans before?” The group also sent their proposals to the respective directors of the Housing, Economic Development, and Commerce and City Planning Departments of Jersey City, but the group never received any response. Undaunted by the inconsistent support coming from city hall, the artists and the tenants’ association continued to contact architects, engineers, and other real estate professionals to build a rival confederation to purchase 111 1st Street from Goldman and then more sensitively and aesthetically develop it.

How to explain or interpret the rather lukewarm reception by figures in city hall to the artists’ redevelopment ideas for 111 1st Street? Obviously, there was no love lost between the city government and the ownership of the building. New Gold Equities fought against the WALDO ordinance and later the execution of the Powerhouse Arts District plan drawn up by the

---

189 The concept of retrofitting has spread well beyond the comfortable confines of the urban landscape dotted with hulking industrial complexes. In fact, many forward thinking suburban communities are exploring the architectural and planning models and ideas of retrofitting to enliven their communities and shape them into more humane, livable spaces. For a seminar, the author and several classmates under the guidance of Dr. Roger Panetta researched Hastings-on-Hudson in Westchester County and created a multi-layered retrofitting plan for the village. *The Retrofit: Hastings-on-Hudson* (https://sites.google.com/site/theretrofithastingsonhudson/).


Urban Land Institute. Other property owners pushed against these zoning regulations as well, but none as vociferously and steadfast as New Gold Equities. Also, in the past, the city government, especially under the Cunningham administration, typically sided with the artists in disputes and pressured New Gold Equities to resolve such disagreements amicably. What changed the dynamic?

One source pointed out that the artists engaged themselves in local politics as the fight for 111 1st Street grew more intense, more volatile, and more crucial to their future in the building. Some of the artists invited unspecified enemies of Mayor Cunningham into the debate and involved themselves in issues unrelated to the building. For instance, one artist wrote a letter to the Jersey Journal lambasting a bond issuance being pursued by Cunningham and city hall. Due to such interference in Jersey City politics, Cunningham placed 111 1st Street on the backburner. The source further corroborated:

I always warn artists about staying out of politics. Politicians will always help constituents. But if they view you as a rival, a combatant, they’ll destroy you. Politics is a bloodsport in Hudson County.

The attempt of the artists to become actors in this brutal, internecine environment revealed a certain degree of naïveté and ignorance regarding the realities of the political world. The politicians of Hudson County earned their collective reputation as a hardnosed, merciless, and sometimes corrupt bunch well over a century ago. Confronting them without tact, nuance, and respect remains a perilous and foolish endeavor.

---

192 The author earlier discussed the interest expressed by Lou Manzo in the future of the building. A perennial mayoral candidate and later a candidate running against the late Mayor Cunningham’s wife for a state senate seat, Manzo was likely not an individual beloved by Cunningham and his camp. Manzo might be one of the unnamed enemies.

193 Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
However, by the spring of 2004, Mayor Cunningham and his administration understood that their personal engagement in the struggle over 111 1st Street was essential to the ability of artists to continue to work and tacitly live in the building. Other ambitious politicians exploring the issue also likely rekindled the administration’s interest. The dramatic escalation in rents and the likely resulting departure of many tenants sparked Cunningham’s reappearance as an advocate for the artists and an arbiter between the parties. Cunningham affirmed his support for the artists of 111 1st Street and his goal of fostering a compromise between the artists and New Gold Equities:

The artists have helped change the image of Jersey City. My goal is to protect [them]. We need a thriving arts community to fulfill the promise of Jersey City … I’m looking at some means of compromising, so the owner can do good things … but so the artists who are there are protected … ¹⁹⁴

The director of the (now defunct) Jersey City Museum validated Cunningham’s statement concerning 111 1st Street:

… [T]here’s no concentrated location like the 111 building. It’s where all the action is occurring. It’s the point of reference for the arts community, from where everything else flows. Everything. ¹⁹⁵

The Cunningham administration and its allies did not wish for the destruction of the city’s most known, revered, envied, and productive arts community to occur during their tenure and keep. The threatened and much feared higher rental rates were scheduled to begin on May 1, 2004. Many of the artists knew that they lacked the financial ability to pay the increased rents

for their loft and studio spaces. In order to attract a public audience to their predicament and to galvanize the public’s attention and support, the artists organized a May Day Festival on May 1, 2004. During the festival, forty of the artists’ studios were opened to the public for self-guided tours, and artistic workshops and musical performances occurred throughout the circuitous halls and nooks of 111 1st Street.\textsuperscript{196}

The selection of May Day as the date of the festival bears further scrutiny. May Day, also known as International Workers’ Day, is a worldwide holiday celebrating labor unions and the labor movement throughout Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Central and South America and commemorating the Haymarket Massacre in Chicago, Illinois in 1886.\textsuperscript{197} By setting the festival and their public protest over their rental increases on that date, the artists identified themselves as belonging to a militant labor movement---and largely working-class tradition of dissent. Workers of the nineteenth century fought for safe working conditions, humane hours, fair wages, and basic respect and dignity in the workplace: the artists of 111 1st Street fought not only for the right to a specific space but for the right to belong to an evolving cityscape and for the very survival of their community.

The May Day Festival at 111 1st Street again underscores the perplexing place of artists in the larger gentrification movement. Artists are straddlers of sorts.\textsuperscript{198} Although they are well-educated and cultured as a social group and as a profession and they possess enviable reserves of cultural capital, artists very rarely earn large incomes. In fact, most artists just cling to the lower-


\textsuperscript{197} Labor Day is celebrated in September in the United States. Sadly, most Americans fail to identify the May Day holiday as American in origin.

\textsuperscript{198} The concept of a “straddler” is best articulated by Alfred Lubrano in his account of the children of working-class households, who gain an education and find themselves elevated beyond the class of their birth. This is an understudied and largely unspoken phenomenon in American culture and social life. Lubrano discusses the difficulties and dislocations experiences by such straddlers. Alfred Lubrano, \textit{Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams} (New York: Wiley, 2005).
middle-class or the working-class rungs on the economic ladder. According to economic measurements, artists belong more to the working class than the middle class and may be even more vulnerable to the forces of gentrification than the lower classes. Lower-class residents living in public housing, receiving Section 8 vouchers, or facing the threat of higher taxes are protected by legal precedent and court rulings, government authorities and institutions, tax subsidies, and various public interest groups. However, artists are viewed by the general population as privileged and able to absorb new financial demands. This perception bears little resemblance to reality.

In the case of 111 1st Street, the artists clearly identified themselves as members of the American working class and successors to a leftist, pro-labor movement. They perceived themselves to be a marginalized, vilified group just as labor organizers were in the Gilded Age and continue to be in many corners of the public sphere in contemporary America:

[We were] portrayed as crackpots and freaks … … [We were] fighting for our innate rights to be who we were and not be prosecuted for it … time of Bush and with us or against us.  

The following months witnessed another event precipitating an unfortunate turn in the fight for 111 1st Street. On May 25, 2004, Mayor Glenn Cunningham died of a massive heart attack. As earlier discussed, Cunningham was a supporter of the artists of Jersey City and had built a tenuous alliance with tenants of 111 1st Street. Although irritated by the engagement of the tenants’ organization in the larger political sphere of Jersey City and Hudson County, Cunningham publicly expressed support for the artists and fought New Gold Equities for their...

---

199 Interview with author, June 18, 2011
right to remain in 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street. Cunningham crafted public policy aimed at building an actual living arts community in the Powerhouse Arts District and he hoped to preserve a piece of the landscape of Jersey City for the arts and for artists. Such an accomplishment would have been a remarkable public legacy. At the time of his death, Cunningham was quietly negotiating leases for the artists with Lloyd Goldman and New Gold Equities. When Cunningham died, those talks ended. The untimely and sudden death of Cunningham resulted in the loss of the most powerful and influential advocate for the artists of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street:

Cunningham died and 111 went into freefall and [it was] down in a few months.\textsuperscript{200}

At the moment of Cunningham’s passing, few realized that the ultimate fate for 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street was effectively predestined. In fact, many of the artists and tenants believed that they had found a much more vocal and muscular supporter in Acting Mayor L. Harvey Smith.\textsuperscript{201} (After Cunningham’s death, the Jersey City Council President, a popularly elected official, ascended to the mayor’s office until a special election could be held in November 2004. The Jersey City Council President seat was then held by L. Harvey Smith.\textsuperscript{202}) At a summer rally-cum-festival in the grounds in front of city hall, Smith voiced his solidarity with the artists of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street:

You guys are like cats. You have nine lives.
111 First Street is going to live. You can count on it and you can count on me.\textsuperscript{203}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{200} Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
\textsuperscript{201} Interview with author, June 18, 2011; “[Smith] was the only mayor to have ‘put his money where his mouth was.’” William Rodwell, \textit{Timeline: 111 First Street, Jersey City, NJ: 1866-2005}.
\textsuperscript{202} L. Harvey Smith stands out as another perennial figure in Jersey City and Hudson County politics. In no certain order, he has served as a state senator, a councilperson, an acting mayor, a county undersheriff, an assemblyman, and multi-time mayoral candidate. Smith was arrested in the FBI’s sting of New Jersey politicians in 2009; he was eventually acquitted of all charges.
\end{footnotesize}
Earlier in the summer of 2004, the city council under the leadership of Smith introduced ordinances to designate the Powerhouse Arts District as a historical district. Smith and his allies in city council also began discussing exercising eminent domain to acquire 111 1st Street and preserve it as an arts community.²⁰⁴

However, a source involved with 111 1st Street from its beginning to its end as a public policy issue questioned the eminent domain strategy:

Smith wanted to showboat and tried eminent domain. [I] talked to him about [the perils of] eminent domain, but [he] was uninterested. Goldman had history of beating eminent domain and knew the system.²⁰⁵

As acting-mayor, Smith was essentially campaigning for a full-term from his first day in office. He needed to make a quick and memorable impression upon the electorate and develop a city-wide base for the coming November special election. Courting the arts community and fighting for 111 1st Street allowed Smith to pursue these goals and could have provided him with a full-term as a mayor. This circumstance might explain Smith’s more confrontational and risky strategy of embracing eminent domain and siding foursquare with the artists of 111 1st Street.

As an interesting side-note and insight into the complex, opaque world of Jersey City politics, the public voice for eminent domain was Councilman Junior Maldonado, who represented Ward E, which includes the downtown, the waterfront, and the Powerhouse Arts District. In 2005, Maldonado was defeated in his reelection bid by newcomer and perceived reformer Steven Fulop. Fulop and his supporters presented themselves a good-government

²⁰⁵ Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
types, standing as a counterfoils to the entrenched political establishment and its ties with developers and real estate interests, essentially the bulwarks of any urban growth coalition. (Ironically enough, this downtown contingent benefits handsomely from rising real estate prices and fits the classic definition of gentrifiers.) However, during the later stages of the struggle for 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street, Fulop was building his political organization and honing his public image. As a political candidate, he would benefit from the demise of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street. If 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street was saved, his opponent Junior Maldonado would gain a political advantage, an exceptional talking point, and the support of the arts community. A source elaborated:

Fulop worked out of the Butler Building [near 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street], watched 111 collapse and didn’t intervene. He could then enter office and look like a good guy. I saw Fulop after he was elected. I said “it’s Xmas and the heat is turned off.” He [Fulop] just nodded. It wasn’t his problem. It was Junior Moldonado’s.\textsuperscript{206}

In 2011, Fulop announced his candidacy for mayor for the 2013 election. Meanwhile, Lloyd Goldman and New Gold Equities moved to fully control the physical space of the warehouse and exert more pressure upon the tenants and artists. This goal of firmly and wholly securitizing 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and monitoring its tenants began with the curfew; however, the ownership greatly elevated its force and scope of this goal in 2004. As relationships and negotiations between the three parties, the city, the ownership, and the tenants, frayed and ultimately tore, New Gold Equities hired off-duty Jersey City police officers to patrol the interior and the perimeter of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street on a twenty-four-hour basis in the summer of 2004. Suddenly, tenants found themselves forbidden from entering the courtyard and the roof under the threat of arrest. Secondary entrances were sealed off, and all visitors and residents had to enter

\textsuperscript{206} Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
the building by the main door on 1st Street and sign in upon arrival. Privately-contracted security guards manned the 1st Street door and tracked all movements of guests and tenants.

This security arrangement calls into question the stance of the city government as a neutral party in the continuous dispute between the artists and the ownership and its periodic claim as a supporter of the artists and their community. Off-duty police officers serving as security at constructions sites, banks, carnivals, and other operations is a common sight in Jersey City. In the case of 111 1st Street (and often in the aforementioned instances), these officers are in full uniform with badges and department-issued firearms. An off-duty police officer holding a second-job in security is not uncommon. However, most municipalities forbid an officer to wear his uniform in this role. The uniform represents the power and the authority of the police force and the local government. A uniformed police officer stands as a symbol of the government and its monopoly on justice, punishment, and violence. By allowing off-duty officers to “protect” the interests of the owner of 111 1st Street, the municipal government may have expressed its priorities regarding the building, the owner, and the artists. Generally speaking, off-duty officers guarding real estate projects and financial institutions demonstrate the city’s allegiance to such interests and businesses.

This emphasis on security and safety at the expense of individuals is a common theme in gentrification studies. Neil Smith documented this effect in his in-depth research on the East Village.\textsuperscript{207} Several scholars have noted this problem in their respective studies of Toronto.\textsuperscript{208}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{207} This neighborhood was no more than a portion of the Lower East Side, but it was rechristened the East Village to link it the storied cachet of the West Village and decouple it from the then gritty and dangerous streets of the larger neighborhood. Now, more college students, foreign tourists, and global rich meander through the neighborhood streets than aspiring poets, punk rockers, greying radicals, and glassy-eyed junkies. Neil Smith, \textit{New Urban Frontier} (London: Routlegde, 1996): 210-232.

Also, the concept of the state---in this case, the Jersey City police department---abetting or working in concert with developers or private interests to chide or force out undesirable elements and populations is an emerging process associated with the neo-liberal state as defined by its critics.\(^\text{209}\)

In the case of 111 1\(^{st}\) Street, the association between the police and the ownership understandably brewed suspicion and controversy. One artist offered his thoughts on the presence of the police at 111 1\(^{st}\) Street:

> [The] police wore uniforms, harass[ed] artists, got kickbacks and [were] able to talk to their girlfriends on the phone.\(^\text{210}\)

Another artist remarked upon the ambiguous position of the police in relation to the building. The off-duty officers were purportedly hired to secure the physical site of the building and to protect the personal safety of its tenants. Nonetheless, when a tenant approached a police officer about a potential issue or problem, the officer “would say that he was off duty.”\(^\text{211}\)

The artists’ complaints over the supposedly off-duty police would increase and would largely prove to be justified during the course of the year.

As detailed earlier, following the death of Glenn Cunningham, the city government announced its intention to explore and exercise eminent domain in order to purchase and secure

\(^{209}\) However, an argument could be persuasively made that the state has historically served as an arm of private and moneyed interests. In American history, the state periodically stood by the laboring class during the Progressive Era and then from the Franklin Roosevelt administration until the 1970s. If anything, the neo-liberal state might represent a return to the old arrangement benefiting capital and the affluent. A strong labor bloc, a liberal or progressive state, and a somewhat cowed capitalist class might have been a historical anomaly or an expression of the need of American business and the government to counteract the economic and social system promulgated by the Soviet Union and its interpretation of communism.

\(^{210}\) Interview with author, July 15, 2011.

\(^{211}\) Interview with author, June 18, 2011.
111 1st Street. The city informed all property owners in the Powerhouse Arts District that the city planned to landmark not only 111 1st Street but also the other industrial sites and warehouses clustered in the district. New Gold Equities began the demolition of 110 1st Street within days of learning of the city’s policy intentions. It remains uncertain whether New Gold Equities had secured the proper authorization and permits to start demolition of 110 1st Street at that time.

Following the August rally in front of city hall and the support voiced by various public officials, New Gold Equities purchased a full-page ad in the Jersey City Reporter, a weekly newspaper owned by a county-wide publisher, in the format of a letter signed by Lloyd Goldman. In this letter, Goldman noted his company’s and his own long-standing commitment to the arts and to Jersey City and touted the construction jobs which would be created by the redevelopment of 111 1st Street. This reasoning is a tested tactic in peeling away labor for any coalition attempting to rival the urban growth model. Goldman claimed that his company had been operating at a loss on the property for some time and that a redevelopment of the property would be necessary for its long-term viability and its continual ability to serve as commercial site, that is, a collection of studio spaces. Goldman stated that the current tenants would need to move elsewhere within the structure during construction, but that they would not be forced to leave. The most revealing sentence in the letter reads:

> The building itself needs extensive investment and we propose to fund that investment by redeveloping the core of the property as new residential space at current market rates.

---

Did 111 1st Street require physical improvement? Most certainly, yet New Gold expressed little interest in improving the space until the real estate bubble grew on the Jersey City waterfront and the surrounding area. Essentially, the property would now furnish New Gold Equities with a far greater return on its investments by wholesale redevelopment and attracting much more affluent tenants than by allowing the building to crumble and renting it to ragtag artists. This pattern fits the rent-gap theory as developed by David Harvey and Neil Smith.

In attempt to garner public support for its project, New Gold Equities inadvertently revealed its true goal: money. The artists were simply a mechanism in maximizing an initial investment.

In October 2004, the elected officials and certain elements of the professional staff of the Jersey City government appeared to coalesce behind the artists and the movement to preserve 111 1st Street as a community, a physical structure, and a vital piece of the city’s architecture and history. The city council unanimously voted to landmark the building and later followed with another unanimous vote to adopt the Powerhouse Arts District plan in early October. This plan designated that all structures falling within the Powerhouse Arts District be rehabilitated and not demolished and that all projects and new construction emphasize the attraction and retention of artists. Additionally, this plan mandated that ten percent (10%) of housing units be subsidized for practicing artists and established specific zoning guidelines regarding the height and mass of new buildings.

It is worth noting that the city’s commitment to its very own plan has been questionable. This fact became more than evident in the years immediately following the battle for 111 1st Street as the city council and the city government greenlit several projects exempt from the

---


Powerhouse Arts District regulations. One source believed that a neighborhood organization had formed “to hold the city accountable to [its] plan” and cited the city’s willingness “to grant extreme variances from the [Powerhouse Arts District] plan” as a major point of contention with the city. However, these events largely followed the story of 111 1st Street.

Not surprisingly, the legal representation for New Gold Equities questioned the technical legalities of the vote and promised immediate litigation over the legislation. New Gold Equities complained that the city was favoring artists---specifically those of 111 1st Street---over property owners. Acting Mayor Smith shot back that Goldman and his company had profited for years due to the artists’ presence in the building.

Was the swift action by the city government due to frustration with the ownership and a genuine solidarity with the homegrown arts community? Possibly, but even the greenest observer of America politics and the urban political system and environment would question the motives of these elected officials. A special election for the mayor’s office was scheduled for November. The Acting Mayor and several councilmen and councilwomen were on the ballot for that office. The downtown councilperson faced a primary election against a reform element in the following spring. All the candidates would possibly earn political capital and public respect for attacking a wealthy and out-of-town landlord and developer and for championing the underdogs that were the artists of 111 1st Street. Even if New Gold Equities successfully blocked the ordinance in court, the politicians could claim that they fought the good fight for a constituency and embraced the cause of the artists as a campaign issue. Thus, the local politicians had much to gain from the vote and little to lose.

---

216 Interview with author, September 26, 2011.
In November 2004, the fight between the artists and the owner developed a dark, potentially deadly facet. A fire started in an empty studio on November 7, 2004 setting off the sprinkler system. During an exchange, one source recalled receiving the news about the fire in the building:

I [got] a frantic email in the middle of the night saying "help! … the building is burning!"\textsuperscript{218}

As in 2002, the artists’ studios suffered more damage from the water than the flames. An investigation by the Jersey City Fire Department discovered that the fire was caused by a disconnected gas pipe allowing “free-flowing gas to interact with lit piles of rags.”\textsuperscript{219} The rags were set afire by candles placed in the studio. Prior to the fire, the studio had been vacant with its doors locked and barred. An unknown individual had attempted to disable pipes in the basement that fed the sprinkler system; however, the sprinkler system remained strong enough to quench the fire. Following the fire, the fire department shut off the gas and sprinkler system in 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and established a twenty-four hour watch on the building until the sprinkler system could be repaired. Shortly after the fire, the arson unit declared the fire to be an act of arson, and two employees of New Gold Equities were arrested on arson charges in December 2004.\textsuperscript{220}

\textsuperscript{218} Interview with author, September 8, 2011.
When asked about the charges and the employees, a lawyer for New Gold Equities responded that as far as he knew “they were picked up for a parking ticket.”

Several suspicious details surrounded the fire in 111 1st Street. The fire broke out a day before a court hearing in which Goldman would have sought a legal declaration that 111 1st Street was unsafe. This declaration would have rendered the recent historical designation moot and allowed Goldman to proceed with redevelopment. The fire occurred in the same area of the building that had been damaged by fire in 2002. The fire of 2004 resulted in the fire department shutting off the gas to the building and forcing all the tenants to rely upon space heaters for warmth in November and December. The fire made an already uncomfortable working and living situation for the artists all the more difficult. Finally, it cannot be denied that employees of the owner of 111 1st Street were arrested for arson. Physical threats and arson are historical tactics embraced by more unscrupulous and less morally-inclined property owners and their proxies in sites of displacement and gentrification.

During the months of November and December 2004, the continual presence of off-duty police officers garnered further negative reaction from the tenants and from the local press. Although the off-duty officers were purportedly on site to guarantee the safety and security of 111 1st Streets and its tenants, they seemingly paid little attention to crimes committed against the artists or their property. In the weeks following the fire, the windows of two artists’ cars were smashed, and one studio was burglarized. More disturbingly, several artists and journalists reported that the police officers forced visiting journalists from the building and

---


222 Acknowledging a gap in his research, the author cannot determine if the two employees were ever convicted on any charges. To answer this question---an important query in establishing a link between the ownership and the arson and to further suggest an illegal and deadly tactic to force out the artists---the author might need to contact the Fire Department or possibly the Hudson County Prosecutor.

threatened them with trespassing charges. During one such incident, a resident artist invited a camera crew from New Jersey News into his studio for a scheduled interview concerning the recent fire. The off-duty officers entered the artist’s studio and ordered the camera crew to immediately vacate the premises. The artist commented on the action of the police and the owner:

They’re trying to control the media. They have no shame … it’s a news story.\textsuperscript{224}

The New Jersey News reporter escorted out of the building by the police said:

We called the landlord to get permission to enter the building but it sounded like the landlord didn’t want us there.\textsuperscript{225}

The actions of the off-duty police lent evidence to the claims that the police served as hired muscle for Lloyd Goldman and New Gold Equities to control access to 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and harass the artists and the tenants.

In a more humorous episode, a tenant of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street filmed a sizable group of Jersey City police officers, some in uniform, some in plainclothes, but all with firearms and badges, drinking heavily just outside of the building. One officer urinated on the wall of an adjacent building, and several officers staggered to their vehicles and subsequently drove away. After a meeting with city officials and Mayor Jerramiah Healy, the tenants’ association presented the video of the drunken police officers. Mayor Healy watched the video and stated that he

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{224} Shandor Hasan quoted in Ricardo Kaulessar, “Bricks in the Wall: Tenants of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} St. Fight for Building Against Bleak Odds,” \textit{Jersey City Reporter}, December 5, 2004.
  \item \textsuperscript{225} Andrienne Supino quoted in Ricardo Kaulessar, “Bricks in the Wall: Tenants of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} St. Fight for Building Against Bleak Odds,” \textit{Jersey City Reporter}, December 5, 2004.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
personally knew several of the officers. The video entitled “Drunk Cops in Jersey City, NJ” eventually went viral and was covered by a New York City news station in 2008.

The constant presence of off-duty police also raises a disturbing question regarding the fire---later judged to be arson---of November 7, 2004: if the police were monitoring and controlling the entrance to 111 1st Street, was the arsonist known to them and, by extension, the ownership of the building? How was someone able to partially disable the water pipes in the basement and enter a mothballed studio without the knowledge of the officers supposedly patrolling the building?

Meanwhile, at the time of the fire and the running controversy over the off-duty police officers, the political landscape shifted in Jersey City. Jerramiah Healy, a former judge and councilman-at-large, won the special election for the mayor’s office in November 2004, running on a law-and-order and neighborhood-centric platform. Healy entered city hall just as the fight for 111 1st Street had entered its climatic stage but arguably the fate for the building was already determined, if unseen by many of the participants. A source elaborated upon this situation:

Healy gets all the blame, but he essentially inherited the mess. During his first week of office, forty tenants [were] screaming drunk outside of his office. He didn’t know what to make of it. Machinery [determining 111 1st Street] already moving at that point.

---

227 [Drunk Cops in Jersey City, NJ](http://www.s6k.com/page.cfm?id_news=72964048&type=1&xid=59765667); [CW11: s6k: I’s “Drunk Cops” Story Goes to Primetime News](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58GJdLOEvXY).
228 Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
Nonetheless, when confronted with the issue of 111 1st Street, the Healy administration established its own policy, and this policy fundamentally altered the city’s relationship with the artists and the ownership.

Previously, the city government under the Cunningham administration supported---admittedly somewhat fitfully---the artists’ desire to remain in 111 1st Street and attempted to broker a favorable agreement between the artists and New Gold Equities to achieve this goal. After Cunningham’s death, Acting Mayor Smith embraced a more confrontational stance, launching a full-bore assault against the ownership and threatening to take the property through eminent domain proceedings. This was a questionable and highly risky strategy: New Gold Equities possessed far greater expertise and resources than the city government and certainly far more than the artists. Furthermore, New Gold Equities understood that time was an invaluable asset. They could simply wear down the opposition or wait for a more agreeable administration to enter office. Finally, one should examine the political motivation behind Smith’s policy strategy. He had much to gain in pursuing eminent domain and crafting an image as a savior of the arts.

Instead of offering support for the artists after taking the mayor’s office in November 2004, Healy stated that he viewed the battle for 111 1st Street as a tenant-landlord issue and a matter to be resolved through the professional staff of the city government and the court system: he did not see 111 1st Street as a platform for political interference or grandstanding. Healy explained his reasoning:

Eminent domain requires a commitment of taxpayer funds. I cannot resolve this longstanding feud between owner and artists by committing taxpayer
money to bail them out.\textsuperscript{229}

Healy, a former practicing attorney and judge, did not wish to spend city funds on an eminent domain suit with a shaky foundation. Also, such a city-generated suit would establish a precedent that the city government would likely be expected to follow in other high-profile cases, and the Healy administration did not want this to occur.

This policy shift by the city government followed the issuance of a demolition permit for specific structures within 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street by a building code official. In December 2004, a city employee approved an emergency demolition permit for an elevator shaft, a water closet shaft and other portions of the southeast corner of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street. Two weeks prior to the granting of the permit, a state Superior Court Judge ordered Goldman and New Gold Equities to submit a plan to remediate the multitude of building code violations lodged against the building. The building code official granted the demolition permit as the plan was presented to the judge. This prompted an outcry by the artists who viewed this as another step toward Goldman finally forcing them from the warehouse. Lawyers representing the artists requested that a stay be placed on the permit, and the judge agreed to hear testimony by the city engineer explaining the decision to grant the permit.\textsuperscript{230} Ultimately, the ownership was allowed to proceed with the demolition as specified by the city official.

Instead of questioning the decision of a member of the municipal professional staff, Healy supported the staff member’s ruling and allowed that it could be challenged through courts; however, Healy would not overrule the building code official or take a side on the matter. A critic might argue that such action or inaction revealed a lack of support for the artists and a politician bowing to the pressures of a wealthy developer, yet, by backing up the action of a bureaucratic professional, Healy demonstrated an admirable and often lacking managerial quality in aspiring politicians: he displayed confidence and respect in an experienced city worker and wanted the process to proceed through the official channels. Healy publicly stood by the opinion of the municipal employee:

[The official] is a longtime employee with good standing in the city. I have to assume [he] did what he had to do.231

Additionally, Healy deferred to the expertise and training of the staff member:

… I’m not an engineer and I have to give some kind of credence to [the official]. Even if I could inject myself here, I would not. I would let it run its course through the courts.232

As noted earlier, many of the artists of 111 1st Street expressed particular distaste toward Mayor Healy, but the machinery to push them from the studios and their home was churning long before his mayoralty. He assumed office well toward the end of the battle for 111 1st Street and was never heavily engaged in the matter. Finally, it should be emphasized that Healy was only the mayor and prominent local politician who did not make assurances and promises to the

artists of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street that he could not keep. Local, state, and federal elected officials made grand pledges of support for the community housed in 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street. But what did they ultimately do? To his credit, Healy never promised anything that he could not deliver.

Nonetheless, the greater fears of the artists proved to be sadly justified. They rightly saw the gradual demolition of 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street as a method to accelerate the slow death of their community and a concerted effort by New Gold Equities to permanently remove them from the building. When questioned about the demolition occurring within 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street, a resident artist remarked:

\begin{quote}
They’re willing to do anything to get rid of us. They just want us gone.\textsuperscript{233}
\end{quote}

Another artist astutely perceived the strategy of the ownership:

\begin{quote}
It’s a domino effect. You take down a little, then a little more and before you know it, it’s down to the ground.\textsuperscript{234}
\end{quote}

On January 3, 2005, fifty-six of the tenants remaining in 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street appeared in State Superior Court to reach a settlement with Lloyd Goldman and New Gold Equities. (The author has been unable to establish why the legal avenues suddenly seemed closed to the artists.) The artists hoped that they could prove that the ownership knew that the artists had been living in 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street for many years and that such evidence would buy them more time in the building. For some reason, this line of argument never arose in the court proceedings. The respective lawyers for the artists and the ownership reached an agreement, largely disappointing to the artists:

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}
Goldman would forgive eight months of back rent and provide a $35,000 settlement to cover the artists’ legal fees, and the artists would vacate 111 1st Street by March 1, 2005.\footnote{William Rodwell, \textit{Timeline: 111 First Street, Jersey City, NJ: 1866-2005}; Bonnie Friedman, “Moving Day for 111 First St. Artists: Grim Picture,” \textit{Jersey Journal}, March 1, 2005; interview with author, June 26, 2011. Why were the artists not paying rent? This is another unanswered question.}

This settlement effectively killed the artistic community that lived, worked, and thrived in 111 1st Street. Following the court settlement of January 3, 2005, the artists and others assorted tenants began to disperse from the warehouse. Some artists remained in Jersey City and others settled in New York City or elsewhere in the greater metropolitan area. Still, others, feeling emotionally, physically, and spiritually crushed, fled the setting of their former home and dreams for distant parts of America and even foreign countries. Two days before the March 1, 2005 deadline, seventy-five tenants, friends, and supporters gathered in one artist’s studio for a final farewell. An artist who partook in the gathering offered a vivid description:

\begin{quote}
[The] community [came] together in a joyous fashion. [We] held a Last Supper for [our] last event with bread and wine. Just like the real Last Supper.\footnote{Interview with author, June 18, 2011}
\end{quote}

Many of the artists associated with 111 1st Street felt that the building and its community had marked a high point not only their careers but in their creative endeavors and in their lives. They all agreed that they had belonged to a special moment in a special place. Then, suddenly, it was all gone.

Although the artists were evicted from 111 1st Street in March 2005, Goldman could not fully demolish the building due to its historic designation. After the ownership petitioned the city and launched a multi-million dollar lawsuit, it was granted the ability to tear down the warehouse in 2006 and completed the demolition in 2007. A press conference and a flurry of
fawning news reports announced the construction of a soaring structure designed by the firm of Rem Koolhaus in early 2007. Currently, the site of the former tobacco warehouse is nothing more than a pile of bricks and loose trash. This is a story deserving its own detailed narrative.

What remains of 111 1st Street and what was its legacy upon the arts community in Jersey City and Jersey City as a whole? When asked this question, one source disparagingly remarked that newer, younger artists in the city thought that “111 was a bunch of dirty hippies that got free rent and didn’t appreciate it” but then followed that thought with the comment that the death of 111 1st Street was a “devastating loss” and that the building was an “immense benefit to the city.” The majority of the sources agreed that the loss of 111 1st Street substantially altered the contours and the viability of the art community. 111 1st Street had provided the community and its regular events, such as the Arts Studio Tour, with a nucleus and a main staging ground. Although an impressive number of artists and creative types continue to work and to live in Jersey City, they are scattered throughout the city and its neighborhoods and are no longer concentrated in a single site or a single area. Admittedly, many in the arts community see this as a positive development for the long-term health of the arts and a way to build and grow artistic clusters and neighborhoods throughout Jersey City. Fewer art galleries and art venues also exist in Jersey City. Many sources contribute this dearth to the loss of 111 1st Street, but the economic downturn of 2008 and the stubborn sluggishness of the United States and overall global economy may have just as much to do with this reality. Too many moving pieces belong to the local and metropolitan creative economy and overall economy to attribute the expansion and the contraction of the arts to any one factor. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that the demise of 111 1st Street played in a role in the shrinkage (if only temporary) of the Jersey City arts community and economy.

---

237 Interview with author, June 22, 2011.
In general, the loss of 111 1st Street diminished the image of Jersey City as a haven for artists. A government official commented that the loss:

Affected the city and county economically---the potential for cultural tourism development, through the anchor of 111 First Street is a great disappointment. Jersey City’s branding and identity was not helped by the loss … 238

An artist remarked:

Jersey City is now in the midst of "developer" and "speculator" growth. There is very little of any arts community left. No more 111 1st Street. Galleries have closed. Non-profits have left. The museum is now shuttered due the city hall budget cuts. I don't know what will happen to Jersey City in the future, but there will not be a renewed arts community coming back to Jersey City. I’m not sure what the city has to offer artists and vice versa … Jersey City is a completely different place without 111. The population that moved there to be part of that kind of spirit and community are not happy and their lives have changed as well. Not for the better. 239

Those involved in the arts community, as practitioners, organizers, or supporters believe the city government sees little use for the arts. One source heavily involved with an art non-profit bitterly observed:

There is a prevailing message given to the arts scene … "we don't want you, we won't fight for you, we won't plan for your survival or provide permanent spaces for you to thrive. You are on your own. Good luck." 240

238 Interview with author, September 7, 2011.
239 Interview with author, June 29, 2011.
240 Interview with author, September 8, 2011
Although many individuals involved with 111 1st Street or the Jersey City arts scene depicted a grim picture, especially following the demise of the building or, as what one former resident characterized as “one big anthill, Tower of Babylon---that was just crushed,” others saw a spirit of renewal borne from the destruction of their beloved community.241 One former artist and resident fondly recalled his role in organizing a massive arts exhibition and event in the former Canco factory (now known as the Canco Lofts in an area of Jersey City edging toward the Pulaski Skyway) in 2007, which “evoked the scale, drama, and funkiness of the old Art Center at 111.”242 The event offered food and drinks to nearly 1700 patrons and lovers of the arts and entertained them with live music, a fashion show, and, of course, art. The following year, the group launched another kick-off event, attracting close to 2500 people. For this alumnus of 111 1st Street, these successful arts events represented:

… a way to demonstrate the kind of muscle the arts community could still bring to bear on a cultural event in the city, and an affirmation of the legacy of 111 First Street and the community of artists that gave so much to the city.243

111 1st Street ushered in a new era for Jersey City and nurtured an artistic community at its most fragile, nascent moment. After nearly a decade of anger, frustration, and struggle alongside joy, friendship, and peace in a community of likeminded personalities and individuals, the artists of 111 1st Street bid farewell to their habitat and their home and moved onward. Although suffering a turbulent and treacherous economic and political environment, artists and the arts still survive in Jersey City. Art and artists are resilient and always seeking new spaces,

---

241 Interview with author, July 21, 2011.
242 Interview with author, June 30, 2011.
243 Ibid.
buildings, neighborhoods, and communities wherein to work, create, and dream. One source offered this piece of optimistic commentary:

Whether or not a city makes plans for permanent arts venues/neighborhoods, art happens. Art happens because communities need it.244

One source instead of cultivating rage and bitterness presented the author with a rueful, yet circumspect interpretation of the story and the experience of 111 1st Street. At an unspecified date, his former business partner moved to China to participate in the arts scene.245 In China, the People’s Liberation Army make it a practice to serve artists and artisans with a day’s notice and then methodically bulldoze their buildings. “111 did better than them,” the source concluded.246

---

244 Interview with author, September 8, 2011.
246 Interview with author June 4, 2011.
Conclusion

This thesis began with the goal of measuring the history of 111 1st Street against the accepted narrative and theory encircling the gentrification process. As with any intellectual endeavor, this project soon assumed a life of its own, and the author found himself exploring side arguments and sorting stories with the leisure and the pleasure of a traveler in the woods discovering forgotten paths. After several conversations with former tenants and those intimate with 111 1st Street and after poring over newspapers articles on the subject, the author realized that the project was a much more complex and enriching topic than originally envisioned. In order to properly analyze 111 1st Street, the author believed that he needed to write the history of 111 1st Street before its most central participants disappeared into other parts of the country or the world and their memories faded away. The author felt that he needed to tell the story of 111 1st Street or, at least, compose its opening chapter and invite other aspiring chroniclers to resume the narrative. Believing that he has accomplished this, the author can return his focus to its original goal.

What does the story and the history of 111 1st Street reveal about the standard scholarly interpretations and theorizations concerning the gentrification process? How does it challenge or confirm them?

The story of 111 1st Street centers upon a large community of artists in an outpost of the greater New York City metropolitan region. Although Jersey City sits just across the Hudson River from Manhattan and promises easier and faster access to Wall Street, Greenwich Village, Union Square, and Herald Square than many of the more desirable and popular neighborhoods in Brooklyn, Jersey City remains an afterthought to many people searching for apartments and
homes. Why? A simple answer would be that Jersey City is located in New Jersey: a very uncool place. Regardless, Jersey City stands as a city rich in its own tales, characters, and histories. Several individuals known to the author have referred to Jersey City as the Oakland of the East Coast—that is, a grittier, dirtier, and in some ways more radical sibling to a more accomplished, popular, and attractive child. This is what made Jersey City appealing to a generation of artists. At 111 1st Street, these artists created a unique, almost hermetically-sealed community within the walls of a rambling, crumbling tobacco warehouse. They seemed to believe that their community could transform Jersey City into a creative mecca for the entire region. Then, their dreams were destroyed by a greedy developer and an uncaring political class.

111 1st Street challenges the gentrification narrative on several fronts. As mentioned earlier in the broader discussion, gentrification is considered to be simultaneously a general and a specific phenomenon and a global and universal process. That is, scholars and urbanists accept that gentrification is unfolding in cities and urban areas (and even rural areas) throughout the United States and the developed world; however, this global process occurs in different manners and with different characteristics depending on the historical, political, social, and economic currents and backgrounds of a respective locality. Therefore, any observer and critic of Jersey City would expect its gentrification, which began on a small scale in the 1980s, to exhibit unique particularities or even anomalies. However, 111 1st Street provides several examples of almost complete deviations from the gentrification theories and narratives. These ideas were discussed earlier in the thesis and will be recapped in the following discussion.

The stage model of gentrification has shaped much thinking on the subject.\textsuperscript{248} This model posits that the complete and total gentrification of a given neighborhood or locale unfolds in gradual, discrete steps. Initially, a group or groups of risk-adverse individuals seek out an area for amenities or features unappreciated by middle-class, wealthy, or conservative elements of society. These groups often consist of artists, writers, students, and gays and lesbians. What do they see in these neighborhoods? It might be affordable and spacious apartments or homes. It might be houses or buildings with fine design and details badly in need of upkeep and repair. It might be a swirl of cultural, ethnic, or racial diversity. It might simply be the perceived freedom offered by a neighborhood forgotten by the mainstream culture.

Following the “discovery” of an area, a secondary wave of new inhabitants arrives. The members of this group possess more economic resources than those included in the initial wave, yet likely consider themselves to be intellectually or creatively minded, espouse a liberal or tolerant politics, and earn their livings in education, government, or creative industries such as publishing or museums. Also, by no measure does this group fall in the category of the economic elite: they are the privileged poor or, simply, an urban middle class.

Next in the stage model, we see professionals, lawyers, doctors, bankers with sizable degrees of capital and economic resources purchasing property and moving into the neighborhood. At this point, artists, students, and other “creatives” are largely priced out of the area. Those protected by rent-control laws or a beneficent landlord or those who possessed the capital and the foresight to purchase when the real estate prices were low might remain in the neighborhood, but the area’s identity as an organic, vibrant creative center or fringe is effectively

dead. Finally, large-scale investors and institutions begin to finance development in the area or to purchase properties on the market.

The artists of 111 1st Street fell solidly into the category of the risk-adverse. Past residents spoke with relish of the decayed state of the area and their close proximity to danger during the early days of their community. After their removal from the building, many residents had no financial cushion to fall back on and moved in with friends or family members. This offers another explanation for their collective reason for fighting for the building. As detailed earlier in this discussion, the artists began gravitating toward 111 1st Street in the late 1980s when the building and the surrounding area were moribund industrial artifacts. The building as a past manufacturing site and its large, cheap spaces drew the artists to its warren of passages, corridors, and lofts. This is a classic example of the first phase in the stage model.

How then does 111 1st Street challenge this model? Simply, the successive steps never occurred. 111 1st Street and its surrounding area---eventually known as Work and Live District Overlay (WALDO) and later the Powerhouse Arts District---never experienced the gradual, if sometimes rapid waves of gentrification. The area transformed from an underutilized industrial zone into a haven for artists and finally into a site of massive capital investment and redevelopment. The second or third waves of gentrification, both compromised of individuals, not corporate entities, never washed over 111 1st Street and the Powerhouse Arts District. The redevelopment of 111 1st Street and the Powerhouse Arts District thus leapfrogged several widely-accepted and long-observed stages in the gentrification process.

A critic might attack this argument by explaining that 111 1st Street and the Powerhouse Arts District stand as examples of new-built gentrification and that they should not be viewed
through the parameters established by the stage model. New-built structures are apartment complexes or mixed-use communities constructed on reclaimed brownfields or industrial districts. Such structures are designed to create dense residential, retail, and office clusters and to attract individuals and families desiring an urban lifestyle. As stated, new-built gentrification largely occurs on abandoned industrial land, thus avoiding the displacement of established communities or groups. However, new-built gentrification has been linked to residual displacement and a negative impact on businesses and homes in surrounding neighborhoods. Many cities and metropolitan areas view such a development plan as key to revitalizing underused and unused land, increasing tax revenues, and drawing new businesses and residents. Scholars have recently initiated a debate whether new-built structures constitute gentrification or reurbanization.²⁴⁹

The Newport area of Jersey City, resting on the previously abandoned waterfront, provides a stellar example of this emerging phenomenon. Prior to redevelopment in the 1980s, the Jersey City waterfront was a mass of rusting railroad tracks and rotting wharves. Today, the waterfront is a collection of office towers, residential high-rises, assorted retail and restaurants, a boardwalk, and a recently opened public park and beach. Aside from a homeless and probable criminal element, no residents were displaced due to the development of the waterfront in Jersey City; nonetheless, this physical reshaping of the city has fundamentally altered its character and socio-economic profile. The local economy relies far more upon the financial services sector

than upon manufacturing, shipping, and storage, and the middle- and upper-classes are growing in the city.

However, the experience of the artists at 111 1st Street did not reflect the description of new-built gentrification. New-built gentrification does not initially involve the displacement of a rooted population or community. Aging blocks are not demolished to make way for glitzy apartment buildings; individuals and families are not pushed out of their homes to make way for a more desirable class. At 111 1st Street, the steady actions of a determined owner ultimately deprived the artists of their workplaces, homes, and community. This was also an existing structure, which the owner originally hoped to redevelop and then market to a more affluent population. The surrounding area, the Powerhouse Arts District, regulates certain specifics in all construction and development projects. Zoning is usually altered and rewritten for the site of new-built gentrification. Once the artists were evicted from 111 1st Street and the building was demolished, the plans resembled new-built gentrification, but decidedly not before that point.

The most troubling way in which 111 1st Street challenges the accepted schools of thought on gentrification is the evidence it presents concerning the value and the position of artists in the gentrification process. Gentrification theory long ago accepted that artists are integral, if not essential to the initiation of the gentrification process. This concept was first fully analyzed in the scholarship of Sharon Zukin.\textsuperscript{250} As examined by Zukin, the transformation of the SoHo neighborhood in Manhattan from a site of light industry to art studios and art galleries and finally expensive apartments and high-end shopping was set off by the “discovery” of the neighborhood by New York’s artistic class.

\textsuperscript{250} Sharon Zukin, \textit{Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change} (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1982).
Zukin elaborated on this process and developed a theoretical concept called the artistic mode of production. In this concept, investors, property owners, real estate professionals, even municipal officials, and others associated with immobile capital view artists as a vehicle through which to enhance the value of their property interests and maximize their investment profits. (The artistic mode of production also fits nicely within the schema of the urban growth coalition.) That is: property owners attract artists to a given area. The artists rehabilitate the area, ancillary businesses and services gradually crop up, and then the area gains a sense of cachet or hipness. This aura of the neighborhood serves as a beacon for individuals and businesses with more financial resources and greater access to capital than the artists. These individuals begin renting or purchasing property, establishing businesses, and allowing the original group of investors to reap windfall profits on the land and the buildings. Of course, this entire process leads to artists being priced out of the area and forces them to seek new neighborhoods in which to live and work. The process also allows for the complete transformation of the economic and social geography of a given neighborhood in order to suit property owners and financial elites. SoHo was once a hub of light industry; however, such land usage was seen as dirty, undesirable, and decreasingly unprofitable for the landed interests. By allowing artists to inhabit loft spaces, the investor class was able to alter the SoHo’s zoning and directly change the physical and economic characteristics of the neighborhood. These new characteristics made the neighborhood more welcoming to an influx of capital and more likely to
produce maximum profits. The Williamsburg section of Brooklyn stands as a more recent example of a neighborhood transformed through this mechanism.

This pattern was first observed and chronicled in the transformation and valorization of Manhattan’s SoHo, but it has occurred throughout the United States, Canada, and likely other cities in the Western or advanced capitalist world. Studies of Chicago, Toronto, London, and Montreal serve as examples of similarly minded scholarship. At first blush, 111 1st Street seems to resemble this paradigm, yet once one bores deeper into the details of the history of the building’s community and its unique gentrification experience, 111 1st Street again challenges another accepted idea of gentrification.

Were artists necessary for the redevelopment of 111 1st Street and the surrounding area? The original ownership of 111 1st Street seemed to believe that the artists could establish the foundation for revitalizing the warehouse and its neighborhood and aggressively courted artists in the late 1980s. The subsequent and current owner, New Gold Equities, essentially ignored the artists throughout the 1990s and allowed its investment to lie fallow. According to the artistic mode of production model, New Gold Equities and other area property owners should have attempted to exploit the concentration of the artists to attract wealthier tenants and lure businesses. This never occurred in the case of 111 1st Street. Instead, once property values

soared in the 2000s, New Gold Equities moved to methodically and completely remove the artists from the building. The artists were no longer seen as essential to the economic revalorization of the building and the gentrification of the general vicinity.

This fact may very well call into question the necessity of artists and other “shock troops” of gentrification to the process. Does capital still require certain groups to first move into an area, beautify it, and generate buzz for further waves of gentrification? Or, in global cities such as New York or its peripheral areas, such as Jersey City, can capital simply furnish a housing supply to affluent individuals, businesses, and investors and quickly receive a profit? Obviously, the case of 111 1st Street might stand as an aberration and not the new example. Nevertheless, future research should explore this question and compare the case of 111 1st Street to other localities.

Today, SoHo no longer attracts hungry artists hoping to make a name for themselves or aspiring curators hustling in galleries. Remnants of its avant-garde period and the spirit of its creative explosion stubbornly cling to the neighborhood. Admittedly, high-end fashion boutiques, trendy restaurants, and tourist traps dominate the majority of the blocks, yet a visitor can still turn down a side street and find a well-stocked art supply store, a used-bookshop, or a tiny café serving French pastry and café au lait. The same can be said of Greenwich Village in Manhattan, and increasingly Wicker Park in Chicago, Northern Liberties in Philadelphia, Williamsburg in Brooklyn, and Hoxton in London.

Capital follows arts, and those with capital follow artists. This pattern is well-established and needs no debate. Once “discovered” by the forces of capital, the social, economic, and physical character and composition of artistic neighborhoods permanently and often
fundamentally change---and not for the better, in the view of artists and other creative types. Nonetheless, an archaeology, a record of the neighborhood’s past and its inhabitants, exists in forms of certain retail establishments (a bookstore, record shop, gallery, etc.) and businesses (a café, restaurant, or bar) and actual people (old-timers, studios, or aging artists). This neighborhood archaeology can be found throughout SoHo, Greenwich Village, and other former bohemian epicenters.

In the case of 111 1st Street, such artifacts are largely absent. The artists were unceremoniously driven out of their studios and homes in early 2005. Following their collective eviction, New Gold Equities assiduously lobbied the city to spot-change the zoning to permit the building of a structure beyond the restrictions and requirements of the Powerhouse Arts District neighborhood. Full-scale demolition of 111 1st Street began in 2006 and concluded in 2007. The site currently remains a pile of building scraps and debris, and debate over the final construction project continues. During its heyday, the community of 111 1st Street thrived as a largely self-contained entity, opening its doors to outsiders for seasonal tours and curious journalists. The surrounding warehouses and former industrial structures remained dormant during the life of the community, and few ancillary creative businesses sprouted and spread beneath the shadow of 111 1st Street. One source attributed this lack to the general financial insecurity of the artists. This glaring archaeologically void might also be explained by the changing nature of the American economy. Retail businesses long associated with creative individuals and countercultural types---bookstores, record stores, and cafes---are withering nationwide beneath the joint assault of online retail and chain stores. It is extremely risky to launch such a venture and unlikely that such a business will survive in today’s economy.

---

254 Interview with author, June 4, 2011.
As discussed earlier in the work, downtown Jersey City has undergone substantial, more traditional stage-model gentrification over the past three decades, and Newport was and remains a site of new-built gentrification. Both areas have gained better, more high-income-oriented businesses, restaurants, and services during this time. The Powerhouse Arts District neighborhood, the former home of 111 1st Street, has witnessed a small, yet noticeable clustering of cafes, boutiques, and creative industries since the demise of 111 1st Street. Such development resembles the emergence of a creative economy.\textsuperscript{255} Although some downtown growth might be attributed to the former presence of the artists of 111 1st Street, all development in the Powerhouse Arts District arose after the death of the arts commune in 111 1st Street.

In many ways, the discussion of a “creative class” in the past decade dovetailed with the notion of the artistic mode of production. The creative class theory posits that the key to economic success currently hinges on the ability of a given neighborhood, city, or region to attract and retain individuals and business enmeshed in the creative economy. Unfortunately, the primary proponent of this theory, Richard Florida, lumps together many vocations and fields which have little if anything in common and labeled them as “creative.” For example, he views both financial service professionals and visual artists as members of this larger creative class.\textsuperscript{256} 111 1st Street also highlights several flaws in the creative class theory.

The chronicle of 111 First Street and its ousted community of artists challenges the reality of a creative class as defined by Florida. In this instance, artists---the population lauded

\textsuperscript{255} This development best resembles that detailed in Liberty Village, Toronto; however, the Powerhouse Arts District lacks the tension and cultural clash between the pure creative and the creative professionals as documented by the authors of the study of Liberty Village. John Paul Catungal, Deborah Leslie, and Yvonne Hii, “Geographies of Displacement in the Creative City: the Case of Liberty Village, Toronto,” \textit{Urban Studies} 46, no. 5/6 (May 2009): 1095-1114.

by proponents of the creative class theory as the vanguard of the re-urbanization—were forced out of an area not due to the “natural” flow of gentrification, but by the developer’s
determination to attract extremely well-heeled professionals working in finance, banking, law,
and other lucrative industries. Ironically, these latter individuals also belong to the creative class
according to the characteristics formulated by Richard Florida. The drive by officials and
investors in Jersey City (and other urban areas) to attract this particular stratum of the creative
class also demands a further revisiting of the viability of other aspects of the creative class theory.

One of the fundamental and laudable premises of the theory, for example, is quality of
place. Florida stresses this value, challenging urban politicians and elites to consider its value in
their own cities and regions.257 Creative individuals and professionals are attracted to a specific
city or geographic region due to its particular features and amenities, such as parks, architecture,
ethnic enclaves, walkable neighborhoods, culture, and the arts. Obviously, if a region possesses
such resources and continues to develop and conserve them, all residents and not just the creative
class benefit from such civic enrichment. Quality of place can engender civic pride and
activism, provide citizens from all walks of life with places to gather and relax, allow the
possibility of casual interactions among strangers and neighbors, and offer experiences in culture
from the street to concert halls and museums.

In the case of 111 First Street, the exact opposite movement occurred. The artists
anchored an area that predictably should have transformed due to the gradual forces of
gentrification, following the pattern of Toronto’s Liberty Village, Manhattan’s SoHo, Chicago’s

Cities and the Creative Class (New York: Routledge, 2005): 50, 49-86.
Wicker Park, or other clusters of artists in urban areas.\textsuperscript{258} According to the typical progressions of gentrification, the artists should have burnished the reputation of the area, thereby attracting creative firms and professionals desirous to its roughhewn environment of its Victorian-era warehouses and silent train tracks. Following that, more investors would have arrived, refurbished the buildings, developed amenities and services, and promoted the authenticity of the emerging neighborhood. Undoubtedly, conflict and displacement would have occurred.

However, something far more dramatic and abrupt happened in the case of 111 First Street. The speed of gentrification accelerated, and the process disappeared altogether as the neighborhood jumped from the initial, rather quiet phase of gentrification to traumatic restructuring. An extremely wealthy and influential investor purchased the building, evicted the tenants, and ultimately destroyed the building. If quality of place is valued by the creative class, why would a developer hoping to attract the most affluent strata of that class destroy the most unique fixture and irreplaceable community in the area?

What did New Gold Equities gain by the successful eviction of the artists from 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street and the eventual destruction of the building? Why would the company destroy an irreplaceable asset---the concentration of the artists---proven to attract an educated and affluent population? Why did the ownership refuse to accommodate the artists in the development of the property? With the lucrative examples of loft properties in SoHo, Williamsburg, and other more distant cities and localities, why did New Gold Equities elect to demolish the historic tobacco warehouse? The simple response is greed. The struggle over 111 1\textsuperscript{st} Street peaked during the heady days of the real estate bubble of the 2000s. However, a more circumspect, yet concise interpretation of the ownership’s goals should be attempted.

\textsuperscript{258} Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, \textit{Gentrification} (New York: Routledge, 2008): 118-121.
In the short-term, especially in light of the contemporary economic downturn, the ownership of 111 1st Street gained little from the defeat of the artists and the subsequent razing of the warehouse. New Gold Equities lost steady, reliable, albeit modest rents, and now the property lies fallow while the ownership waits for the economy to improve and to resolve standing squabbles with the city. In the long-term, the ownership gained the ability to alter and remap the physical space, the very geography of Jersey City. The artists collectively stood as a barrier to capital, representing a rejection of a culture and a lifestyle consumed with the idea of getting and spending: that is, the artists existed as a group attempting to forge an alternative to the dominant economic and social system. Viewing 111 1st Street as a community---not just a physical and economic structure---the artists espoused a pre-capitalist mentality. Thus, in order to accomplish its more long-reaching goal, the ownership had to remove the artists of 111 1st Street to produce a social geography benefiting capital.259 Capitalism as a system requires constant expansion.260 111 1st Street as an arts community existed as an impediment to such growth, further explaining why it had to perish.

The author of this particular study devoted his research to 111 1st Street in order to shift the gentrification debates away from the better known and more frequently chronicled metropolises of New York, Toronto, and London. Such cities offer engaging and rather easily discovered stories of gentrification; however, smaller cities, those sitting at the metropolitan edge of dominant cities or existing as centers themselves offer exciting and rewarding challenges to scholars and thinkers. The author hopes that other writers will see this work as both a model and an inspiration to expand gentrification narratives beyond their comfortable, well-worn confines.

Finally and most importantly, the author approached the subject of 111 1st Street and its artists as an act of preservation. The community dispersed in the early months of 2005, and the physical structure itself now exists only in photographs, art, and memory. Some of the former residents and artists of 111 1st Street still work and live in Jersey City and Hudson County, but others have moved to other parts of the country or the world. Memories drift away, and people quickly forget past lives. Before the author embarked upon this project, 111 1st Street may have been destined for the rubbish bin of history. Now, such a bleak fate seems a little less likely. 111 1st Street is now gone and fading into memory and the past. However, this study aimed to preserve that memory before it was lost to decay and neglect. The author hopes that he has achieved this goal and he hopes that others will build a richer, greater story of 111 1st Street upon his rough foundation.
Appendix I: Figures, Photographs, Maps, & Assorted Images

Figure 1: P. Lorillard Tobacco Company, 111 1st Street, Jersey City, New Jersey, circa 1883. (Richard Edwards, *Industries of New Jersey, Hudson, Passaic, and Bergen Counties* (1883): 886.)

Figure 2: 111 1st Street, Jersey City, New Jersey, October 2004. The scaffolding suggests that New Gold Equities was already working on the “stabilization” of the structure. (Photograph courtesy of Bill Rodwell.)
Figure 3: 111 1st Street Jersey City, New Jersey, February 2006. The bulldozer sits on the site of the demolished 110 1st Street. Note the office tower construction in the background. (Photograph courtesy of Bill Rodwell.)

Figure 4: 111 1st Street, Jersey City, New Jersey, November 2010. (Photograph courtesy of Jessica Murphy, Ph.D.)
Figure 5: 111 1st Street, Jersey City, New Jersey, November 2010. Note the Trump Building in the background. The Powerhouse is a designated historical landmark and is currently slated for redevelopment. (Photograph courtesy of Jessica Murphy, Ph.D.)

Figure 6: Advertisement included in media press packet. This advertisement was part of a marketing campaign to attract artists as tenants to 111 1st Street, Jersey City, New Jersey. (Courtesy of the Jersey City Free Public Library.)
Figure 7: Hudson & Manhattan Trains Powerhouse, Jersey City, New Jersey, November 2011. (Photograph courtesy of Jessica Murphy, Ph. D.)

Figure 8: Empty interior, 111 1st Street, Jersey City, New Jersey, February 2005. (Photograph courtesy of Bill Rodwell.)
Figure 9: Chimney of 111 1st Street, Jersey City, New Jersey. This was an architectural feature treasured and fondly remembered by many former residents and artists. (Photograph courtesy of Bill Rodwell.)
Map 1: Jersey City, New Jersey. (Courtesy of Google Maps.)

Map 2: 111 1st Street and surrounding areas, Jersey City, New Jersey. (Courtesy of Google Maps.)
Appendix II:

Interview Questions: Artists

1. Describe your affiliation with 111 1st Street:
2. How long was your residency?
3. Can you describe the nature of the arts community at 111 1st Street?
4. Did your community affect the renewed growth of Jersey City?
5. Were you engaged in the protest against eviction and demolition?
6. Has the loss of 111 1st Street affected the local arts scene and the area in general?
7. How did the loss of 111 1st Street affect you?

Interview Questions: Businesses

1. Were you operating during 111 1st Street?
2. How did the presence of 111 1st Street affect your business?
3. Were you involved in the protest over evictions and demolition?
4. Has the loss of 111 1st Street affected the area and your business?
5. Has the loss of 111 1st Street affected the local arts scene and the area in general?

Interview Questions: Public Officials

1. Were you in the area (working for the municipality, etc.) during the debate over 111 1st Street?
2. Were you involved in the process? If so, in what capacity?
3. Was the process handled properly?
4. How has the loss of 111 1st Street affected PAD and Jersey City?
5. Has the loss of 111 1st Street affected the local arts scene and the area in general?
6. How does the city government interact with the arts community?
7. How does the arts community impact Jersey City?

**Interview Questions: Non-Profits**

1. Were you operating during 111 1st Street?
2. How did the presence of 111 1st Street affect your organization?
3. Were you involved in the protest over evictions and demolition?
4. Has the loss of 111 1st Street affected the area and your organization?
5. Has the loss of 111 1st Street affected the local arts scene and the area in general?
6. How does the city government interact with the arts community?
7. How does the arts community impact Jersey City?

**Interview Questions: Businesses and Public Officials Answering “No” to Question 1**

1. What have you heard about 111 1st Street?
2. Does an arts community exist in Jersey City?
3. What does the arts community lack in Jersey City?
4. How does the government/business community interact with the arts community?
5. How does the arts community impact Jersey City?
Message Board Query

1. I am a graduate student at Fordham University, researching the former arts community at 111 1st Street. If you resided or worked in the building, I would like to opportunity to ask you a few questions in person or via email. Please contact me at: _______.


Jersey City Ordinance. 96-069 (June 26, 1996).


