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# A Tale of Two Cities: A Case Study on Marketing Revitalization

Dorinda Francis  
*Seton Hall University*

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**A TALE OF TWO CITIES:  
A CASE STUDY ON MARKETING REVITALIZATION**

**By**

**Dorinda Francis**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the**

**Master of Arts Degree in Strategic Communication**

**Graduate School at**

**Seton Hall University**

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## **Abstract**

This study was conducted to determine if public relations played a vital role in revitalizing urban cities. It also tested the satisfaction of residents. The study used the Township of Irvington as its case study.

The study involved a review of related secondary research of articles and interviews with professionals who are apart of the Township. Primary research involved a content analysis of the Township's main newspaper from 2000-2008, in-depth interviews with the Construction Official and the East Ward Councilman, and intercept surveys within the Township of Irvington. The analysis revealed public relations is necessary to assist a city in its revival process. Since many cities have limited budgets, cities must utilize their current resources to promote their new city. Utilizing local cable access channels, partnering with business owners, and dedicating a special section in the local newspaper to the revitalized progress were strategies suggested.

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## **Chapter I**

### *Introduction*

The image and development of a city directly affects its economy and the quality of life of its residents. Cities must attract businesses, developers, investors, employees, visitors, and residents, to expand their financial bases and keep them practical in a competitive market. Particularly, metropolitan cities have focused on revitalizing key areas, such as historical landmarks, the downtown district, and the borders of neighboring cities, as a central point to entice businesses and people considering living or working in the city. However, revitalizing a city goes much deeper than just generating revenue. In order for inner-cities to be a more attractive place to live, work, shop, and do business, it must speak to the daily encounters of its residents and the ability of the cities to attract additional people, places or things to add value.

Real and lasting revitalization can take precedence with the collaborative effort of government officials, residents, and concerned citizens. People choose to live and businesses choose to invest in attractive communities that are perceived to have a high quality of life. People desire neighborhoods that are safe, abundant in cultural amenities, supports family life, celebrates the past (history, family-legacy), nurtures creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit and brings people together in a pleasant local environment.

However, how can civic areas feel the economic impact due to revitalization if people hold-fast to the inadequate, old, or vanished image of that city? Most cities have to work with tight marketing, advertising or tourism budgets and cannot afford to upgrade their reputation. Cities and states invest millions in urban redevelopment. Recently, JP Morgan Chase Bank has given one million dollars to non-profit community development organizations to help develop affordable housing in Newark, East Orange, and Trenton

(Hestor, 2008). Likewise, the Township of Irvington has offered tax abatements to attract housing developers. In addition, the Mayor of Irvington has made trips abroad with a Chinese delegation and started a World Trade Council to spur business in the township.

A few years back, the Township of Irvington and New Jersey Transit completed a five million dollar renovation of the second busiest bus terminal in the state of New Jersey (Township of Irvington press release, 2004). Moreover, in 2003, Essex County invested over \$100,000 to improve the safety of Irvington Park playground and Branch Brook Park in Newark (Township of Irvington press release, 2005). One of the most notable marketing events to put the Township of Irvington on the national platform was the “Extreme Home Makeover” television show. This was great publicity, wherein the town partnered with American Broadcasting Channel (ABC) to help the project work smoothly. In addition, these cities have demolished abandoned properties, paving the way for new construction. Thus, without successful marketing and public relation strategies, these development projects may not be recognized. Advertising campaigns are expensive and only reach a certain target area. Giving a face-lift to metropolitan cities is more than repackaging with an eye-catching marker. It must find specific tactics to promote its new image.

Specifically, catalyzing the transition of redevelopment in Irvington took strategic planning. The Township of Irvington abides by six guiding principles (Township of Irvington press release, 2004):

- Return underutilized, obsolete and underproductive land and buildings to the tax rolls
- Turn around and stabilize deteriorated neighborhoods
- Preserve the economic vitality of Springfield Avenue
- Create gateway vistas



- Establish amenities to attract regional activity: white linen restaurants, family dining, hotels, big- box retail
- Encourage wide-spread reinvestment and employment in Irvington

These principles serve as a guide to attract investment as a critical component to Irvington's emerging revival.

Presently, some city organizations have turned to a combination of advertising and public relations to market themselves. They have realigned themselves by focusing on major developments. For example, to attract residents and entrepreneurs to the East Ward in Irvington, the Township has completed a series of endeavors from getting a preservation grant to maintaining housing stock and businesses to transforming an existing liquor store into a franchise of Krauszer's Food Stores. To draw vendors and livelihood, the City of Newark pushed for the newly built Prudential Center. Partnerships have emerged throughout cities to secure all types of projects. Although the Township of Irvington does not have the 'green space' to hold a Prudential Center like Newark, the Township has hosted music concerts during the summertime to lieu families, friends, and guests. These partnerships have produced a tremendous amount of innovative, collaborative work, particularly in recreational programs, social services, and development. There has been a thrust of new residential dwellings developed by way of previously dilapidated buildings and other areas that underwent major renovations. By working in partnership with local and state agencies, developers, entrepreneurs, and residents, marketing revitalized cities will promote an influential and positive image locally and nationally.

However, one cannot equate the City of Newark with the Township of Irvington. There is a fine distinction between the opportunities both have to offer. While Irvington

is a Township with great potential and certainly filled with a notable history of its own, it cannot make comparable efforts as Newark. For example, the Township is not equipped to have an arena like Newark, but has invested millions of dollars in recreational resources for the parks in order to provide a means for those who want to utilize such services. Also, Irvington may not have its own performing arts center but each summer a concert series is held, inviting people to not only join in the entertainment, but feel safe as well.

### *Importance of Issue*

How does a city change or improve its image or entice visitors to their city? What significant role does promotions, media relations, or special events play? Which tactics are cost-effective and of use? It is not a simple answer. Some may say that change comes from the top-down, i.e. elected officials, and of course others would say that it is from the bottom up, the people themselves. This researcher believes that they both must make an assertive aggressive move towards progress and get buy-in from all parties.

The portrayal of a city is essential to the city's livelihood. One's perception determines whether or not he or she will frequent businesses in that city, feel safe enough to live in that city or raise a family, or start his or her own business. Instead of stories revolved around violence, what about stories that reflect kindness, generosity, tolerance and forgiveness? Even more, what benefit does negative news provide except to create a climate of fear? Lastly, when did bad news become the only good news? If you reflect for a moment, right before the news team signs off, one will hear a 30-second story about a foster mother who has taken in six challenged children whose house is being remodeled due to a severe fire that damaged 80% of the house. If this story was turned into a full

segment, it would have shown a city of hope where neighbors do look out for one another and care about their community.

### *Problem Statement*

This researcher plans to answer the question how does a city undergoing redevelopment market itself? What are the indicators a city is reviving? How would one really know this as factual information or un-factual? Cities have already renovated and constructed buildings, altered properties, persuaded businesses and implemented marketing strategies to sell its new image. Thus, what role does public relations, if any, play in the city's renaissance to draw potential prospects?

### *Purpose of Study*

Many cities lose or gain prospects based on their image and the preconceived notions of the prospects. Cities have to find new ways to market themselves. Public relations play an important role in assisting inner-cities to change and grow. Public relations build the credibility of an image for a city. People want to feel safe, secure. They have to know they are making a worthwhile investment: excellent school system, recreational programs, low crime rates, and visible policing. This researcher expects certain communication techniques will help market the revitalization of a city. Before a city can sell its events and activities, it must first sell itself. A city's reputation and image creates lasting impressions.

### *Definition of Terms*

Marketing- activities involved in making sure one's continuing to meet the needs of ones customers and getting value in return

Public relations- ongoing activities to ensure the organization/company has a strong

public image

Redevelopment- to restore to a better condition

Revitalization- to impart new life or vigor to

Urban renewal- land redevelopment in areas of moderate to high density urban land use

### *Limitations*

This study will not focus on government or political influences or other reasons for revitalization. This researcher will concentrate on the perception of a city, the indicators that tell improvements are on the rise, and how a city should be marketed.

## **Chapter II**

### *Literature Review*

#### *History*

Ten to fifteen years ago, if someone were to watch Fox 5 news at ten o'clock, he or she would only have heard reports on criminal activities such as gang related mischief, robberies, car thefts, or murder charges in an urban community. If the same person would have picked-up the *Star Ledger* or *Irvington Herald*, he or she would have read about state funding being cut and how it effected extra-curricular activities in the school system or how a political figure was going to jail for corruption. These images have damaged the name and livelihood of inner-cities. In particular, Irvington residents fled their neighborhood because they did not want to live like prisoners in their own homes, nor did they want to become a statistic. Residents, as well as commuters, had to witness abandoned properties become dilapidated eyesores. Business owners had to relocate because solicitors began to drive their customers away. Children could no longer play outside of their homes because it was no longer safe. What was even worse was calling the police and having to wait hours for their arrival because they were short on staff. Citizens could not see where their tax dollars were going. This was not an environment where one could start a life, raise a family, or retire and enjoy the rest of his or her life. Such reports being disclosed on the news put cities, such as Irvington, in a negative light.

Over the past six to eight years, cities such as Irvington, Newark, East Orange, have undergone a change. Cities were almost forced to revitalize if they planned to

flourish in the coming decades. To make their changes known, many cities have turned to tourism and marketing. Buildings were erected while cultural and recreational activities took on new meaning, and entrepreneurship and redevelopment established residency. This occurred to further economic growth for the city. The concept is to revitalize urban communities by utilizing their strengths as opposed to concentrating on their shortcomings (Marshall, 1997). By doing so, the asset-based system creates hope and excitement instead of reliance and hopelessness (Marshall, 1997). The approach is a vital stepping stone to strengthen urban neighborhoods (Marshall, 1997). Cities have responded to the desire by reviving the area.

### *Redevelopment of Cities*

What gives a place its character is its uniqueness. According to *American Demographics* in 2001 (Gardyn, 2002), a special report found Americans are undergoing a reality shift in just about every essential facet of their lives. Urban cities, therefore, have to raise the quality of life. Attributes such as commute times, access to public parks, a good school system, etc. plays a bigger role in where people choose to live (Gardyn, 2002). In the past six to eight years, many metropolitan cities have comprehensively planned strategic town-wide redevelopment projects. For example, the Township of Irvington received designation as a weed and seed community, in which social ills are weeded out and positive programs are planted (Township of Irvington press release, 2004). Categorized into four major strategies: law enforcement, community policing, prevention/intervention/treatment, and neighborhood restoration, the weed and seed program has led to an increase of citizen involvement, addressing public safety concerns, developing relationships and working partnerships, and exchanging ideas for solutions (Township of Irvington press release, 2004).

Pittsburgh became the first major city to undertake a modern urban-renewal program in 1950 (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Pittsburgh was infamous around the world as one of the dirtiest and most economically depressed cities and seemed ready for urban renewal (Fitzpatrick, 2000). A large section of downtown, the heart of the city, was demolished, converted to parks, office buildings, and a sports arena and renamed the Golden Triangle in what was universally recognized as a major success (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Currently, a

mix of renovation, demolition of dilapidated properties, commercial development, and tax incentives are most often used to revitalize urban neighborhoods.

Renewing hope in urban areas is nation-wide. In 2001, the Environmental Protection Agency invested \$450,000 to assess environmental conditions at abandoned, contaminated sites in six New England communities (Environmental Protection Agency New England press release, 2001). The grant helped communities to restore and develop contaminated properties across New England (Environmental Protection Agency New England press release, 2001). As a result, thousands of jobs were created generating millions of dollars in income and tax revenue (Environmental Protection Agency New England press release, 2001). Specifically, in Somerville an abandoned industrial building became the home of an assisted living facility operated by the Visiting Nurses Association (Environmental Protection Agency New England press release, 2001). The development produced 45 new jobs and filled a critical community need (Environmental Protection Agency New England press release, 2001). Previously known as a lumber yard and marina and the Oxford Paper Mill, these properties have reclaimed their once historical use.

Likewise, the Township of Irvington has recovered from its thrust of turmoil and is poised for growth. Where there was once a slope of decline and deterioration, meaningful activity abounds; where inaction was the norm, productivity is now the standard. The Township secured numerous grants for the demolition of eyesore properties, which made way for redevelopment as modern, attractive residential and commercial structures. As an example, the demolition of a mammoth property, which housed the landmark Drake's Bakeries, was resurrected as an Auto Zone creating full- and part-time positions.

According to *Money Magazine* (2006), the Township of Irvington experienced an increase in home price gain between 2004 and 2005 by 17.10%. Likewise, between 2000 and 2005 Irvington had a 3.14% increase in job growth (*Money Magazine*, 2006). In comparison, the City of Newark experienced a home price gain of 22.30% between 2004 and 2005 (*Money Magazine*, 2006). Newark also had an increase in job growth between 2000 and 2005 by 9.16% (*Money Magazine*, 2006). Although there is a 5.2% difference in home price gain and a 6.02% difference in job growth, one must consider the

demographics between the Township of Irvington and the City of Newark. According to the 2000 United States Census, data shows Irvington's population at 60,695 residents (2008). The same data shows Newark's population at 273,546 residents (2000 United States Census, 2008). The median age for residents in Irvington is 31.5 (2000 United States Census, 2008). The median age for residents in Newark is 30.8 (2000 United States Census, 2008). This slight difference in home price gain proves there is a migration to urban living. Thus showing revitalized cities have the elements people are seeking when looking for a home.

Cities have vied for consumers to come into town. After just two years in office, the Mayor of Irvington experienced a remarkable increase of residents leaping from renters to homeowners by 22% (Township of Irvington, press release, 2004). Likewise, Gardyn (2002) talks about entrepreneurs starting their businesses between 25 and 40 years of age and more likely than not, they do it in the city they grew up in. There are influencing factors as to why that is, but the main reason is because entrepreneurs want to invest back into the communities that was once apart of their lives.

### *Developers*

While residents are investing in revitalized properties, developers are claiming their stakes in urban renewal too. Brian Ellis (Tatge, 2007) has made advancement in developing destroyed areas. Nationwide Group, the company Ellis works for, assesses commercial property nationally (Tatge, 2007). What has assured their success is the duration of time Ellis takes to redevelop properties (Tatge, 2007). In a five to ten year period, Nationwide Group along with Columbus, Ohio developer Frank Kass, redeveloped the Homestead Steel complex in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (Tatge, 2007). Together, they constructed a 2.3 million square foot commercial space resulting in 60 retail stores, 23 restaurants, 235 apartments and a 22-screen theatre (Tatge, 2007). Ellis has also constructed a 1.1 million square foot project in Des Moines, Ohio designed to restore a worn out section of Des Moines with parks and public amenities (Tatge, 2007).

Like Nationwide Group, Old Homes Inc. specializes in the revitalization of neighborhoods and the re-positioning of undervalued properties (Old Homes, Inc., 2008). The company believes that the rate and efficiency of revitalizing a community is one of

the key success factors to achieving exceptional return on capital (Old Homes, Inc., 2008). For example, in 1999 Highland Park, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, was a deteriorated community and beyond repair (Old Homes, Inc., 2008). When Chattanooga's mayor appealed to developers to invest in the neighborhood, no one responded (Old Homes, Inc., 2008). However, when Old Homes, Inc. took on the project, they entered with "determination, energy, and vision" (Old Homes, Inc., 2008). At the end of completion, Heather and Jonathon Bell restored the neglected properties, raised the standard of living, and captured media attention (Old Homes, Inc., 2008). In return, consumers responded and sales increased (Old Homes, Inc., 2008).

In the Township of Irvington, development has soared tremendously. From 2002 to 2006, the town has experienced growth not only with new construction, but with businesses as well. In particular, businesses located in the shopping district have a central location for residents, commuters, and visitors to solicit their services. As stated previously, the Irvington Bus Terminal serves as a host to 12,000 people on a daily basis (Township of Irvington, press release, 2004). In the interim, people have the opportunity to see the progress the Township has made first-hand.

### *Investors*

Through the State Department of Community Affairs' Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program, JP Morgan Chase Bank has committed \$1 million to nonprofit community development organizations to help inner-cities acquire affordable housing (Hestor, 2008). Investors view such a program as their way of giving back to the communities where they do business. Ann Borowiec, head of JP Morgan Private Bank in New Jersey, stated "we have an opportunity to make a difference in the communities we serve by building strong partnerships, collaborating with community organizations and targeting our investments in areas where our employees contribute their time and talents" (Hestor, 2008). The Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program equips businesses and nonprofit organizations with the resources they need to renew the neighborhood (Hestor, 2008). Projects such as economic and workforce development, preserving open space and social services, to name a few, promote revitalization (Hestor, 2008).



In 2002, Washington Mutual Bank reinvested more than \$1 billion in New Jersey to stimulate financial development in urban neighborhoods (Township of Irvington, press release, 2002). The agreement provided below-market rate mortgages, home improvement loans, community and economic growth, small business loans, bridged financing for affordable housing developments and tax credit investments (Township of Irvington, press release, 2002). In addition, the Township of Irvington has held numerous homebuyer seminars for first time home owners. The seminars not only educate prospects on home buying and mortgage negotiation, it provides instruction on credit management, bankruptcy, and predatory lending. Enlightening potential prospects is an investment for Irvington's future.

### *The Role of the Media*

With urban cities experiencing revitalization through developers, investors, and businesses, how are these communities thought of in a negative context? In the past six years, the Township of Irvington has witnessed new housing developments, the reconstruction of the Irvington Bus Terminal, initiatives to stop gang violence, and a plethora of activities for children (Township of Irvington, press releases). According to Rod Underhill (Gardyn, 2002), cities have become a victim of their unmanaged reputations. Sally Jackson, president of the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, states cities have to get better at hypothesizing what they are about because image is everything. Hence, whose responsibility is it to inform the public locally, state-wide and nationally about the revitalization inner-cities are undergoing? This researcher believes disseminating information about a city should be distributed through the city and media outlets.

Marcus Doel and Phil Hubbard (2002) explored how cities can promote themselves. They propose cities prosper on the strength of their characteristics (Doel and Hubbard, 2002). For example, with the collaboration of city officials and the business community, promoting the city as a practical environment for business, through posters, websites, etc., is a key characteristic (Doel and Hubbard, 2002). This type of marketing appeals to reinvention of the city as an "innovative, international technopole by providing spaces designed to foster the sharing of tacit and codified knowledge among an

intellectual, innovative elite” (Dole and Hubbard, 2002, p. 360). The reconstruction of city properties has been a means for city officials to present previously industrial cities with a new post-industrial identity (Dole and Hubbard, 2002).

Equally, Michele S. Moses (2007) investigates the connection between the medias responsibility to educate the public. Specifically, she views print media as being extremely influential in regards to people’s decisions (Moses, 2007). Accordingly, print media have a vigorous role as educators of the public (Moses, 2007). As such, they shape the choices citizens make (Moses, 2007). Moses (2007) argues the media have an obligation to help educate the public so that they are sufficiently prepared for a well-informed reflection. It is pertinent to recall the media has been permitted to freedom of the press in exchange for the public information and educational function it serves (Moses, 2007). Likewise, “politics, power, corporate interests, and financial motives all have an effect on what stories get airtime, how they get covered, which perspective or perspectives are represented and what information is presented” (Moses, 2007, p.155).

In addition, information the media provide is often times the main source of information (Moses, 2007). Therefore, what reporters choose to include can have a tremendous impact on the public’s decisions (Moses, 2007). When only certain pieces of information are revealed, the reader does not get a thorough picture of the matter (Moses, 2007). As a result, the public is being misled if only part of the story is presented (Moses, 2007). Michael Schudson and Danielle Haas (2007) relate a survey stating a large number of Americans feel positive about local television news, local newspapers, and network television news. Thus, if the public receives ‘spin’ news, where will they go to get vial and dependable information? For example, if *Time* and *Life* magazine, as well as *The Saturday Evening Post* had not written about the true revitalized transformation of Pittsburgh (Fitzpatrick, 2000), the public may not have moved to the city or visited the city.

### **Chapter III**

#### *Procedures*

This researcher used various methods to examine the issue of how an urban city which has undergone revitalization uses public relations to market itself. Combinations

of quantitative and qualitative methods were developed to collect data. Methods employed were online resources, library databases, interviews, intercept surveys, and a content analysis of local business journals.

The Township of Irvington was used as a sample case study to support the research question. This researcher also searched the website of the Township of Irvington beginning its revitalization in 2002.

#### *Secondary Research*

Most of the secondary research was found in library databases such as Lexis-Nexus, Academic Search Premier, and EBSCO Host. Current and back issues of the *Irvington Herald* were reviewed.

#### *Telephone/In-depth Interviews*

This researcher chose to interview the Councilman of the East Ward and the Township's Construction Official. Due to the location and time, most of the interviews are done over the phone. This researcher contacted the interviewees by telephone to inform them of the study, ask for their participation, and set an interview time. Questions are geared toward the image of urban cities, different communication tactics, and marketing before and after revitalization began.

#### *Content Analysis*

This researcher chose to study the official newspaper of the Township to compare the positive and negative coverage of the Township before and after revitalization. Papers were selected through a search of the archives using key phrases: revitalization, renewal, and redevelopment. Newspapers from 2000 to 2008 were selected through a search of the archives. This researcher analyzed articles from the main newspaper in Irvington, which is the *Irvington Herald*. The articles were reviewed in categories of positive, neutral, and negative during the period of past, present or future. This will help demonstrate the image of the Township at different stages.

To determine if public relations does benefit the revitalization period of a city, a content analysis was conducted on the local newspaper in Irvington. The paper examined was the *Irvington Herald*. The researcher divided the newspapers into two categories: early or pre-renaissance and post to current renaissance.

### *In-depth Interviews*

In-depth interviews were performed in the Township of Irvington. The researcher interviewed two professionals associated with the Township of Irvington. The interview lasted about forty-five minutes to an hour. Each interviewee was charged with the changes they have witnessed and the image of the township.

N. Sileem (personal communication, March 25, 2008), Construction Official, feels people are migrating back to inner-cities due to transportation, mortgage companies and banks, and Irvington's shopping center. Transportation is the biggest reason because it is convenient for people to get around (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). The [Irvington Bus] Terminal hosts about 12,000 people a day; that is a lot of people (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). Also, they have more than one way to get to their destination (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). In reference to mortgage companies and banks, N. Sileem (personal communication, March 25, 2008) feels they appeal to potential residents. When asked how, N. Sileem (personal communication, March 25, 2008) explained mortgage companies make it easy for a person to finance a property, especially with programs that are available to first time homeowners. Lastly, being the heart of surrounding cities, such as Newark, Maplewood, and Union, Irvington is heavily populated with commuters on a daily basis. According to N. Sileem (personal communication, March 25, 2008), Irvington Center is attractive for people who are looking for reasonable prices and the convenience of being able to stop on one's way home. If the stores did not appeal to the people, then they would not utilize their services (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008).

Therefore, the data collected does support the notion that revitalization helps to revitalize a city and draw economic growth to the area.

When asked the question what changes have occurred to make people change their views of Irvington, N. Sileem (personal communication, March 25, 2008) stated the economy. The economy has changed the public's view because, in his opinion, they can see the growth the Township has made (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). Due to redevelopment and the success of current businesses, people are encouraged to do business with the Township, whether that is buying a house or shopping in the downtown area (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). Over the

years, the Township has offered people the opportunity to grow- job experience and business experience (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). For a period of time, developers felt they could come to the administration and tell them what the town should have [projects] (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). However, with the implementation of the redevelopment team and the strategic plan for redevelopment, developers must now propose a project that is desirable for the Township, administration and the residents (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). The perception has changed, that is the difference (N. Sileem, personal communication, March 25, 2008). N. Sileem (personal communication, March 25, 2008) sums the changes up as being positive.

Hence, marketing the image of a city is essential to one's perception of that city. If the face-lift of a city is not disseminated, it will only hinder the growth of that city.

### *Content Analysis*

As far back as 2000, the Township of Irvington held real estate auctions to make certain properties available for people to purchase, allowing those properties to be put back on the tax rolls. The auctions serve as development potential for the Township. In addition, articles addressed strategic revitalization studies that were completed to outline specific areas in the Township that were in need of comprehensive redevelopment. Further, the revitalization of dormant properties was essential in providing employment opportunities for residents as well as much needed social services for the community.

The content analysis also revealed that elected officials are all in agreeance on one subject: the Township of Irvington is a place for people to live, work, and shop. If given the chance, Irvington is a place where a young couple can start their lives, raise a family, or retire happily. Despite experiencing economic hardships and gang-wars, each elected official has spoken-out, implemented initiatives, and created alliances for the citizens of Irvington. One must realize, those who are in office have been there for years and have also been Irvington residents for just as long, if not longer. What affects the residents of Irvington, affects town officials as well.

## Chapter IV

### Research Findings

An exploratory study was conducted to examine the satisfaction of residents in the Township of Irvington. The study tested residents' general points-of-view in regards to the development the Township has made in the last four- to- eight years. The study also tested the regular reading of the Township's newspaper and the use of the Township's local access channel and measured the effectiveness of marketing and public relations to the revitalization process. Triangulation of research was incorporated using qualitative personal interviews and an intercept survey plus a quantitative content analysis of the local newspapers were studied.

### Content Analysis

To determine if public relations benefits the revitalization of a city, a content analysis was conducted on the official newspaper in the Township of Irvington. The newspaper examined was the *Irvington Herald*. In total 200 editions of the *Irvington Herald* were examined. The researcher divided the newspaper into two categories: early or pre- revitalization and present/current revitalization.

### Content Analysis on the Tone of Articles Before/Present Revitalization

Figure 1

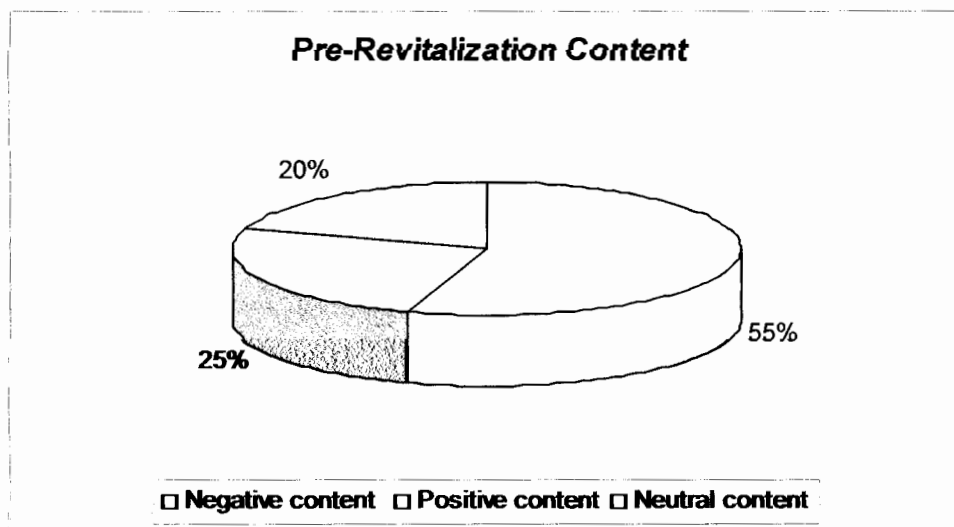
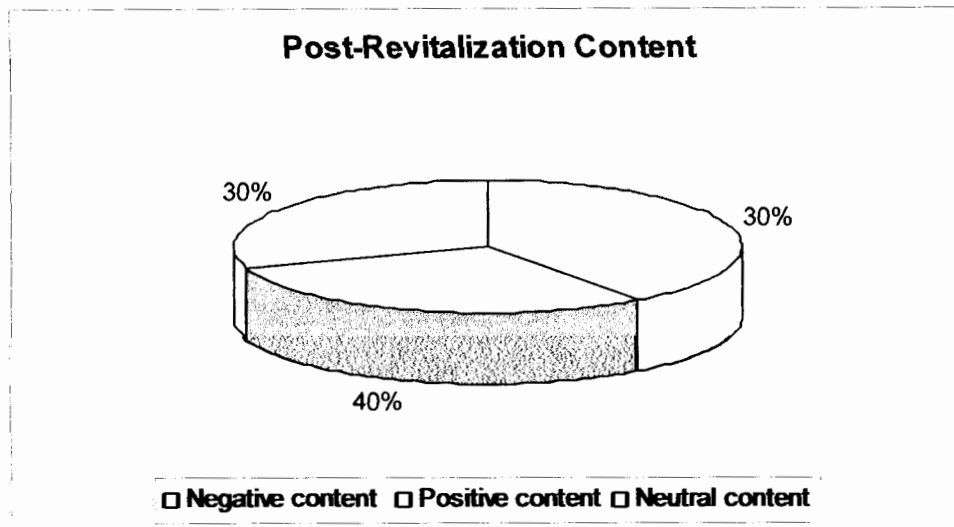


Figure 2



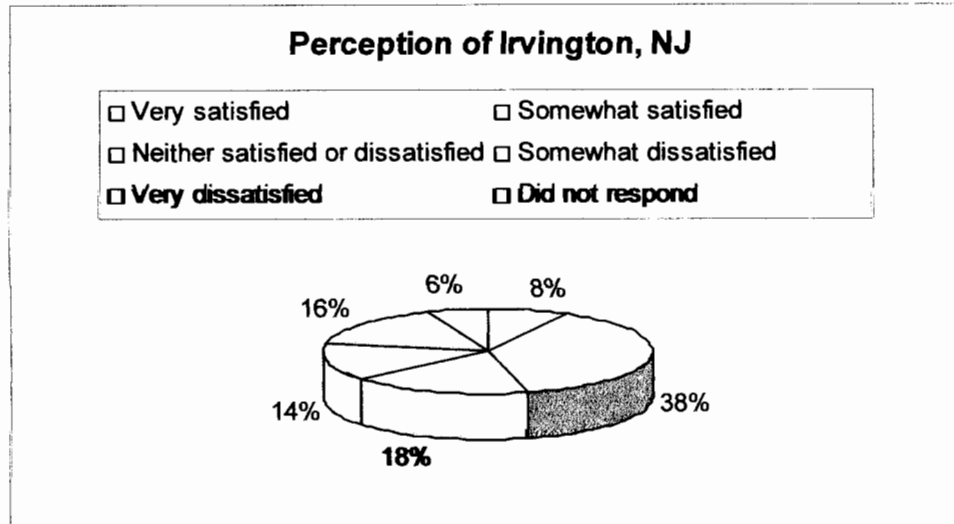
As Figures 1 and 2 shows, during the early period 55% of the newspaper was negative in regards to the perception of the Township of Irvington and 25% was positive. Twenty percent was neutral. Once revitalization began, the coverage was 40% positive and only 30% negative.

#### *Intercept Survey*

Fifty intercept surveys were conducted at random locations such as the Township of Irvington's municipality, the post office, and different convenient stores. Respondents were asked if they were residents of the town. They were also asked their overall satisfaction: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied or dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied. As seen in Figure 3, 38% of those surveyed said they were overall somewhat satisfied with the Township and 16% felt they were very dissatisfied with the Township. Six percent of the participants did not respond to this question.

## Intercept Survey Testing Perception of Irvington

Figure 3



### *In-depth Interview*

An in-depth interview was performed with the East Ward Councilman, who has had the most development and revitalization to occur throughout the Township. The interview focused on using public relations to improve the Township of Irvington's image and vitality.

Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008), feels the biggest public relations effort over the past four years was the Township of Irvington's Urban Enterprise Zone's concert series. "The series was an effort to draw attention to stores in Irvington", stated Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). When asked to elaborate on the concept, Q. McKenzie explained the Urban Enterprise Zone participating vendors charge three percent sales tax as opposed to six percent and the other three percent is put back into the Township (personal communication, June 17, 2008). "To enter the concerts, one needed a receipt from a local business in the amount of minimally \$10.00. This was great because the venue that was being offered would normally cost \$60.00 minimally per concert", explained Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17,



2008). Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008), stated in 2004 and 2005, thousands of folks came from across the tri-state area for the concert series to hear rhythm and blues, jazz, and religious artists who have records to go gold and platinum. “At one concert, more than 8,000 [people] showed up”, stated Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008) not only feels the concert series was great publicity, but a good opportunity for visitors to see the changes that have come about in the Township. People utilized the newly renovated Irvington Bus Terminal to come to Irvington as opposed to driving to the concerts, stopped by the surrounding eateries to get a bite to eat before attending the concert or after the concert, and shopped in Irvington Center, affirms Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). “Businesses loved the concept and idea”, said Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). From a public relations perception, the Township was considered safe and fun and economic development boosted profits (Q. McKenzie, personal communication, June 17, 2008).

When asked if the use of public relations helps to revitalize a city and draw economic growth to an area, Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008) replied yes. “People must realize that municipalities are like businesses and in that spirit, they compete for jobs, people, and other business”, said Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008) further explained public relations helps to build a public perception and has proven to be a major indicator for determining the impact and affect on the Township’s reality. When asked to give an example, Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008) stated, “The bottom line is that public relations affect Irvington’s investors, media, and the general public.”

Hosting special events are another successful marketing element revitalized cities can use to lure visitors into the cities.

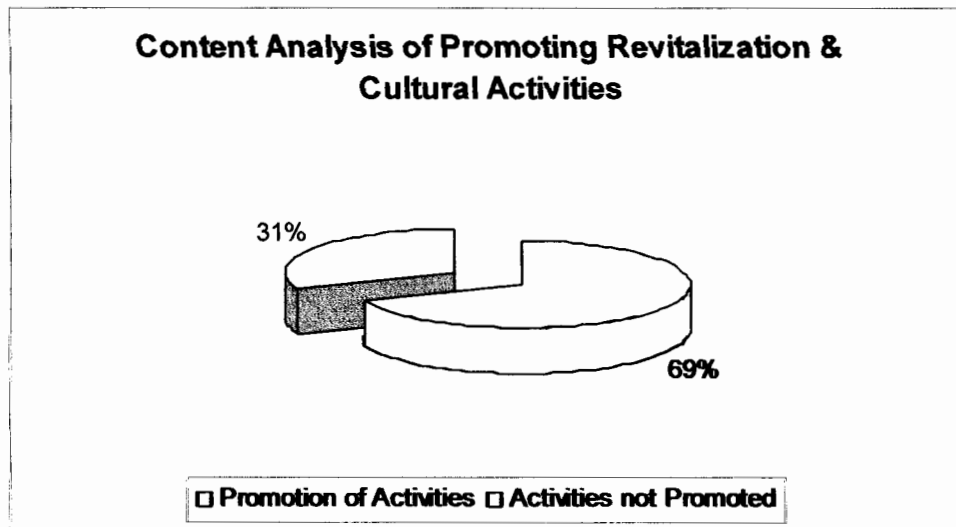
### *Content Analysis*

In the last four to eight years, the Township has taken a proactive stand in promoting the revitalization of Irvington and has extended an invitation to people to do

business with the Township. As seen in Figure 4, redevelopment and cultural activities appeared in 69% of the *Irvington Herald* articles.

### Content Analysis of Promoting Revitalization and Cultural Activities

Figure 4



### Intercept Survey

As part of the intercept survey, respondents were asked what has the Township done a good job of: identifying the needs of residents, acquiring outside resources to help fight crime, developing the overall outlook of the Township, or recruiting developers, business owners, etc. into the Township. Eighty percent of the participants answered acquiring outside resources to help fight crime and sixty percent answered identifying the needs of residents.

Participants were also asked what area (s) of improvement they have seen in the last four to ten years: policing, resource/recreation programs, ems performance, or responsiveness of governing body. Fifty percent of the respondents answered policing. Resource/recreation programs and responsiveness of governing body were equally chosen by participants 30%.

### *In-depth Interview*

Quality of life is pertinent to everyone (Q. McKenzie, personal communication June 27, 2008). When a person looks to buy a home or enroll his or her child in school, a person considers the environment and the mind-set of people in that environment (Q. McKenzie, personal communication, June 27, 2008). I am proud to say that Irvington is no longer looked upon as a place where there is no hope and only unanswered questions (Q. McKenzie, personal communication, June 27, 2008). Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 27, 2008), states that while there are still challenges the Township faces, changes have been made over the years. “The Township may not be where we would like it to be, but progress never ends”, states Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 27, 2008).

### *Content Analysis*

Having examined the revitalization of Irvington within the past four to eight years, it was found positive coverage was given to the vast redevelopment and urban renewal in the Township. Two hundred and twenty articles out of two hundred editions of the *Irvington Herald* indicated residents recognize the revitalization covered over the last eight years. The content analysis study also found that 160 of the articles pertained to quality of life matters, which was addressed by residents and the Township’s administration.

### *Intercept Survey*

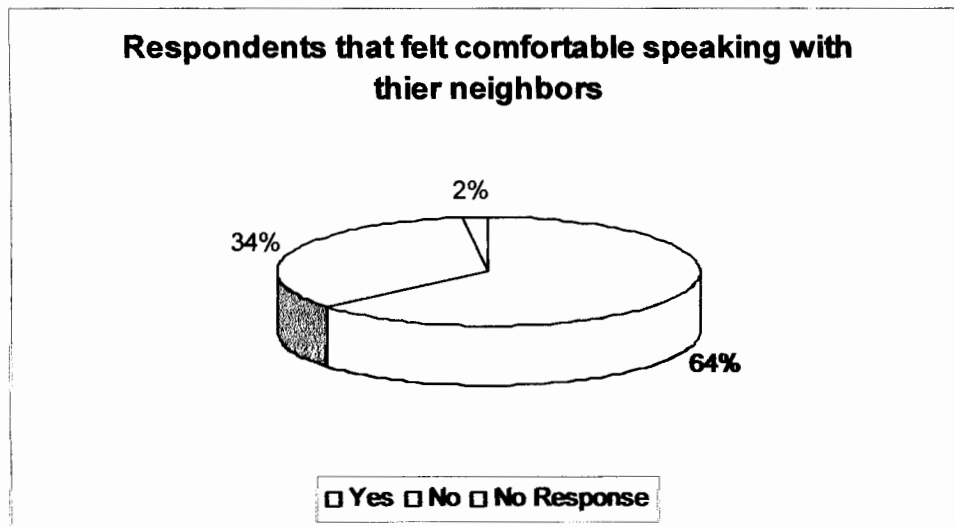
As part of the intercept study, respondents were asked if they would recommend the Township of Irvington to others as a place to live, work, or play. Forty-eight percent of the participants answered yes and forty percent of the participants answered no. Table 1 shows a list of reasons provided by the respondents as to why they answered yes or no. Twenty-five percent cited employment as the primary reason for recommending the Township of Irvington as a place to live, work, or play. Other significant reasons for recommending the Township of Irvington were transportation, the needs of residents, and improvements made in the Township of Irvington.

**Table 1 Reasons to Recommend/ Not Recommend the Township of Irvington**

Yes- 48%	No- 40%
Employment – 6	Crime- 7
Transportation- 5	Environment- 4
Resident’s needs- 5	Gangs- 5
Improvements- 4	School system- 2
Diversity- 4	Drugs- 2

Respondents were also asked if they felt comfortable speaking with their neighbors. As seen in Figure 5, 64% of the participants answered yes and 34% of the participants answered no. Respondents cited shared values as one of the reasons for answering yes along with being friendly and approachable.

**Figure 5 Intercept Survey Testing Perception of Township of Irvington**



In addition, respondents were asked if they felt their neighborhoods are a good place to start a family or retire. Forty-six percent of the participants answered yes and forty-six percent of the respondents answered no. Table 2 show a lost of reasons

provided by the respondents as to why they answered yes or no. One of primary reasons participants stated yes was due to their neighborhoods/neighbors. One of the primary reasons participants stated no was because of crime in the Township.

**Table 2 Reasons Neighborhood Is Good/ Is not Good**

Neighborhood/neighbors – 12	Crime- 8
Good environment- 6	Drug dealers/users- 6
Quiet atmosphere- 5	Hang-out- 4
	School system- 3
	Quality of life- 2

*In-depth Interview*

Over the years, Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008) has seen quite a few changes. “People want to live, learn, and work in close proximity to each other”, stated Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). Although there has been a population shift from the north- east to the south and mid-west, there has been a shift from rural and suburban New Jersey to urban (Q. McKenzie, personal communication, June 17, 2008). “The prototype of urban New Jerseyans is now young, urban professionals whom spend a lot of time at work and do not want to commute much and because they are not into having children right away, they want to remain where the action is and that sin urban areas”, stated Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). For Irvington, that has been a plus (Q. McKenzie, personal communication, June 17, 2008). Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008) added, young workers find Irvington housing stock more attractive in comparison to other cities. When asked to elaborate, Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008) explained the Township of Irvington is strategically located because it is strategically intersected by the Turnpike, Parkway, Interstate 78 and Route 280.

### *Content Analysis*

The content analysis conducted a review of the use of media relations to help revitalization. The articles analyzed showed media relations as part of the revitalization process. Thus, the content analysis study found that 110 articles in relation to the overall media coverage were positive and 65 articles were negative.

### *Intercept Survey*

Respondents were asked if they watched the Township of Irvington's local cable access channel or read the *Irvington Herald* regularly. Thirty-two percent of the participants answered yes and sixty percent answered no. Eight percent stated sometimes. Respondents cited informative as the primary reason as to why they watched the Township's local cable access channel. Respondents cited not knowing about Irvington's local cable access channel as one of the reasons they do not watch. Another significant reason the participants do not watch the Township of Irvington's local cable access channel or read the *Irvington Herald* is because they are not interested. Negativity was the reason provided as to why participants do not read the *Irvington Herald* on a regular basis. Table 3 shows a list of reasons given by the respondents as to why they answered yes or no.

**Table 3. Intercept Survey on the Viewership of the Local Cable Access Channel and Readers of the Irvington Herald**

Yes	No
Informative- 6	Did not know- 12
	Not interested- 10
	Does not want to get involved with politics- 8

### *In-depth Interview*

According to Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008), the effects of budget cut-backs has affected the way the Township has previously been able to

promote programs, events, and new developments in the Township. It has always been a challenge to entice residents to utilize the resources that are already available for them and easily accessible (Q. McKenzie, personal communication, June 17, 2008). “Truly, the need for public relations still exists. In lieu of it, we are now doing public promotions by [means of] promoting ourselves and the Township as best we can”, stated Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008).

On the municipal level, public relations means working closely with the Planning, Housing, and Zoning Departments as well as the local Chamber of Commerce in an effort to keep Irvington’s name in the public, stated Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). “When the Township partnered with American Broadcasting Channel to make ‘Extreme Home Makeover’ a reality, the *Irvington Herald* as well as the *Star Ledger* showed how renewal, not just urban renewal, is possible”, stated Q. McKenzie (personal communication, June 17, 2008). Thousands of people were able to see the positive changes brewing in the Township (Q. McKenzie, personal communication, June 17, 2008).

## **Chapter V**

### *Discussion*

Cities across the country are spending millions of dollars revitalizing and redeveloping in the hopes of luring residents, businesses, and visitors. While most attention and a review of available literature focused on cities that have experienced revitalization, they did not discuss how those cities went about changing their image or people’s perception of the cities. This study will be an example for all cities experiencing revitalization to use public relations techniques to enhance their marketability and attract revenue.

### *Summary and Implications*

As a result of this research, metropolitan cities should be able to identify the qualities that make their city unique. This can be done through a satisfaction survey as the researcher has done or by other means, thus allowing one to get the true perception of the city. This researcher found communications techniques do help to revitalize a city.

Through content analysis, in-depth interviews, and intercept surveys, it was discovered that public relations would play a vital role in the revitalization of the Township of Irvington. Although there is not appropriate funding to produce a full-scale advertising campaign, the Township can turn to public relation strategies to help promote the Township.

The content analysis revealed that there is ample coverage promoting the revitalization of Irvington. As previously stated in the paper, the Township has renovated the Irvington Bus Terminal, transformed a liquor store into a franchise of Krauszer's Food stores, and constructed over 50 new houses, to name a few. Overall, the intercept survey supports residents' perception citing they are somewhat satisfied with the Township of Irvington due to outside resources being acquired to help fight crime, identifying the needs of residents, and developing the overall outlook of the Township. These improvements can be seen through policing, resource/recreation programs, and the responsiveness of the governing body.

The content analysis also indicated that the media's role is essential to successful public relations process throughout the revitalization period. The in-depth interviews with the East Ward Councilman revealed public relations affect the Township of Irvington's investors, media and the general public. However, the intercept survey revealed that residents are not regular viewers or readers of the Township's media outlets.

### *Conclusions*

The triangulated results helped produce the following conclusions:

1. Based on the research, no matter what stage of the redevelopment process, public relations plays a role in how a city is perceived. Having 38% of somewhat satisfied residents says a lot about the positive changes that have occurred as a result of revitalization. This is an indicator a city has revitalized. Being able to market such growth puts an affirmative spotlight on a city.
2. When incorporated with niche marketing, promoting cultural activities and redevelopment projects have drawn a large number of people to an area. For example, when the Township of Irvington holds their concert series, they target people of all ages because there is something for everyone. Like cultural



activities, renovated or new construction properties appeal to the characteristics people look for. All of these traits should be used to change an urban city's image from a negative perception to a positive one. For example, a key theme for the Township of Irvington is the Township's slogan, which can be used to sell itself as a marketing theme. Combining redevelopment projects with the Townships' slogan is guaranteed to bring positive awareness to the Township.

3. Before someone comes to an urban city to live, work or even play, his or her negative perception of that city must first improve. Although 48% of the respondents stated they would recommend the Township of Irvington, 40% did not. The eight percent difference is very significant. One must look at the respondents reasons why: crime, environment, gangs, school system, and drugs. While the Township is working vigorously to combat all of the negative reasons stated above, such behavioral patterns are a big detriment to the revitalization and marketing of a city. Although the intercept survey was not broken down into wards (north south, east and west), as long as there is any amount of crime and gang activity, it will be extremely difficult to change a person's perception of an urban city despite the 48% who would recommend the Township. Just the same, it would be damaging for an urban city having gone through a revitalization period to have visitors frequent specific areas only and not the entire city as a result of the negative preconceptions.
4. One way for metropolitan cities to market their 'new' image is through media relations. The content analysis study found that 110 articles provided coverage to the revitalization process. Thus only 32% of the respondents answered yes to watching the Township's local access channel and reading the Irvington Herald. The 60% who answered no cited not being interested and not wanting to get involved with politics as reasons as to why they do not read the newspaper. Twenty percent cited they did not know the Township of Irvington had a local cable access channel. As a result of the respondents not reading the newspaper or watching the local cable access channel, the Township is not able to inform or share its redevelopment projects or cultural activities. As a consequence, such

lack of exposure can limit the Townships capability of changing any of the 60% negative preconceptions.

### **Recommendations and Limitations**

The result of this study indicated that urban cities should implement a public relations component to their revitalization process. In addition, cities that want to continue promoting their city but may not have the budget should first look to the city's own media resources. To obtain successful results, metropolitan cities should utilize their local cable access channel, devote a special section in the city's newspaper to the city's progress, partner with business owners to run advertisements on the local cable access channel and mail quarterly newsletters to residents and include a satisfaction survey to. Also, the results of the survey should be placed on each city's website to show the growth of each city and to market the city.

This research began as an exploratory study to reveal the importance of public relation in a redevelopment process and the significance of it when marketing, specifically, urban cities. In this respect, the study accomplished its goal. However, this study did not focus on specific public relations techniques.

Although this study did reveal insights into residents' perception of the revitalized Township, it is not without limitations. The in-depth interviews only sampled a couple of people and did not include or survey private organizations that handle marketing for various urban cities. The Construction Official and the East Ward Councilman acted as a major source of information. The researcher could only focus the content analysis on an eight year period, but the Township of Irvington's revitalization period is not completely over. In addition, due to time constraints, the researcher did not perform intercept surveys in the City of Newark or the City of East Orange, who have experienced revitalization as well.

Although there may be limitations in this study, vital information has been uncovered to implement a successful public relations campaign to assist the revitalization process and aid in marketing the Township's image.

## **Future Research**

Following are suggestions for future research and further study. The researcher recommends replicating the study with a broader number of in-depth interviews and surveys. A study could be conducted in 2012 to evaluate the perception of Irvington then and compare them to the year 2008.

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## Appendix A

### Township Satisfaction Survey

Age Group:	18-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	Over 41
Ward you live in:	North	South	East	West	
Years living in Irvington:	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	Over 21

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1. Overall Satisfaction (Circle one)

Very satisfied \* Somewhat satisfied\* Neither satisfied or dissatisfied\* Somewhat dissatisfied \* Very dissatisfied

2. Irvington is doing a good job of the following (select all that apply):

- A. Identifying the needs of residents
- B. Acquiring outside resources to help fight crime
- C. Developing the overall outlook of the Township
- D. Recruiting developers, business owners, etc. into the Township

3. What area(s) of improvement have you seen in the last four to eight years?

- A. Policing
- B. Resource/recreation programs
- C. EMS performance
- D. Responsiveness of governing body

4. Would you recommend Irvington to others as a place to live, work, or play? Why or why not?

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5. Do you feel comfortable speaking with your neighbors? Why or why not?

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6. Do you feel your neighborhood is a good place to start a family or retire?

Please list your reason(s) for yes or no.

Yes                      No

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7. Do you watch Irvington's local cable access channel or read the Irvington Herald regularly?

Yes                      No

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8. How did you come to live in Irvington (select all that apply):

- A. Location
- B. School system
- C. Resource/recreational programs
- D. Quality of life
- E. Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. During the past year, have you either contact Town Hall via telephone or in-person for any reason at all?

Yes                      No

10. Do you approve of the ordinances, policies and practices of the local governing body? Please list why yes or no.

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