Revitalization as byproduct: A Case Study of the Latino Immigrant Business Community in the Italian Market

Diana Bustos

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Latino Immigrant Business Community in the Italian Market
Research Methods

• Informal conversations and interviews with Latino immigrant business owners (7 informants, variation of enterprises)
Setting Up Shop in the Italian Market
Latino Immigrant Business Owners chose to open their businesses in the Market.

- Availability of open, affordable spaces
- For self-employment reasons and to serve the growing Latino population
- Prior experience or a relevant skillset
- Problems with Philadelphia Licenses and Inspections (L&I)
  - Confusing regulations and requirements; language barriers
Counteracting Blight
Difficulties during the first few years

• Early 2000s - “...the street was cluttered and dumpsters were overflowing...”
  • Swept own store fronts + sidewalks frequently
  • Repairs to deteriorated infrastructure
• >7 year owners witnessed significant decrease in physical disorder
  • Sanitation improvements and increased cleanliness
  • Increased walkability
Implications of a Growing and Diversifying Customer Base
Variations in Business Activity

- Business targeted the growing Latino community – minimal business duplication in mid-2000s
  - “…there was less competition in the beginning... my business was profitable from 2004 to 2006 because at that point I was one of the only stores to offer Mexican products to the community, now there are many stores that sell the same merchandise.”

- Increased competition is beneficial to some:
  - “Competition from other businesses, even those offering the same [services or products], has benefited my [business]... more people come [to the market] because there are more places to visit...and other business owners send people our way.”

Setting Up Shop in the Italian Market

Counteracting Blight

Larger / Diversifying Customer Base
Developing Networks
Varying Levels of Social Connectedness

• Collective effort to organize cultural events (*Carnavals* and Festivals) – enabled through the creation of Latino alliances and organizations stemming from the community
• Strong community-police relationship
• Effective informal social control measures
  • “...we look out for one another...”
  • Low violent and property crime volume and positive perceptions of safety
Planning for the Future: Developing Individual Strategic Visioning among Latino Business Owners

- Differing visions or plans for business growth and development
  - Diverged over time
  - Strained relationships
- Businesses with visions of growth lack resources
  - Need guidance to formulate and realize effective long-term business plans
  - "Few immigrant business owners have the set of skills needed to manage a business."
    - Minimal to no accounting experience
    - Language barriers prevent them from accessing the city’s online resources for small businesses
    - Limited knowledge of marketing strategies
The revitalization of the Italian Market is a byproduct of the growth of Latino immigrant business owners.