

BOOSTERISM AT A LOCAL LEVEL

Analyzing underlying agendas within various city spaces by interpreting a local news outlet

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This paper will provide an analytic discussion assessing a local news outlet in Loveland, Colorado to explore and recognize the theory of boosterism. Boosterism may be applied in the field of journalism. Likewise, the concept of urban renewal plays a role in shaping the view of how a small American town functions. By analyzing what's newsworthy, source selection, and audience, this paper will examine how journalists create news on a local level. Among the interpretation of 90 articles, city history, and demographics, this paper will develop a point of view by determining patterns within journalistic work. The research conducted has evaluated that a news outlet can resemble boosterism. Moreover, this evaluation discovers this aspect by interpreting the concept within a social framework. Lastly, this paper aims to establish a purpose by using the same techniques being applied in journalism nowadays.

KEYWORDS ; boosterism; displacement; local news; city spaces

INTRODUCTION

A string of shootings compelled a regional task force to come together in Northern Colorado in spring 2015. According to an article published in the Loveland Reporter-Herald, “The Northern Colorado task force, headquartered out of the Windsor Police Department, is a collaboration between the Windsor Police Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Larimer County Sheriff's Office, Larimer County District Attorney's Office, Weld County Sheriff's Office, Weld County District Attorney's Office and now the Loveland Police Department” (Rieck, 2015).

Prior to the shootings, journalists placed importance on reoccurring incidents of shattered car windows and the possibility of a natural grocer developing in Downtown Loveland. Moreover, programs about urban renewal efforts and tourism projects were also underway. “The program is intended to create large regional tourism-generating projects,” wrote Craig Young, a reporter, (2015a). According to an article published by Saja Hindi (2015), “Loveland’s three Regional Tourism Act application projects being considered are a whitewater adventure park, a sports science and training/tournament campus and an indoor/outdoor water park hotel.”

In addressing such topics, this outlet shifts the audience’s attention to prioritize on events that empower the hegemonic structure in this municipality. Dreier (1982) writes, “Boosterism-glowing stories of new investment plans, fawning profiles of corporate executives, optimistic summaries of quarterly and annual corporate reports.” This is relevant because such media moves are recognizable not only within the Reporter-Herald but also throughout this nation.

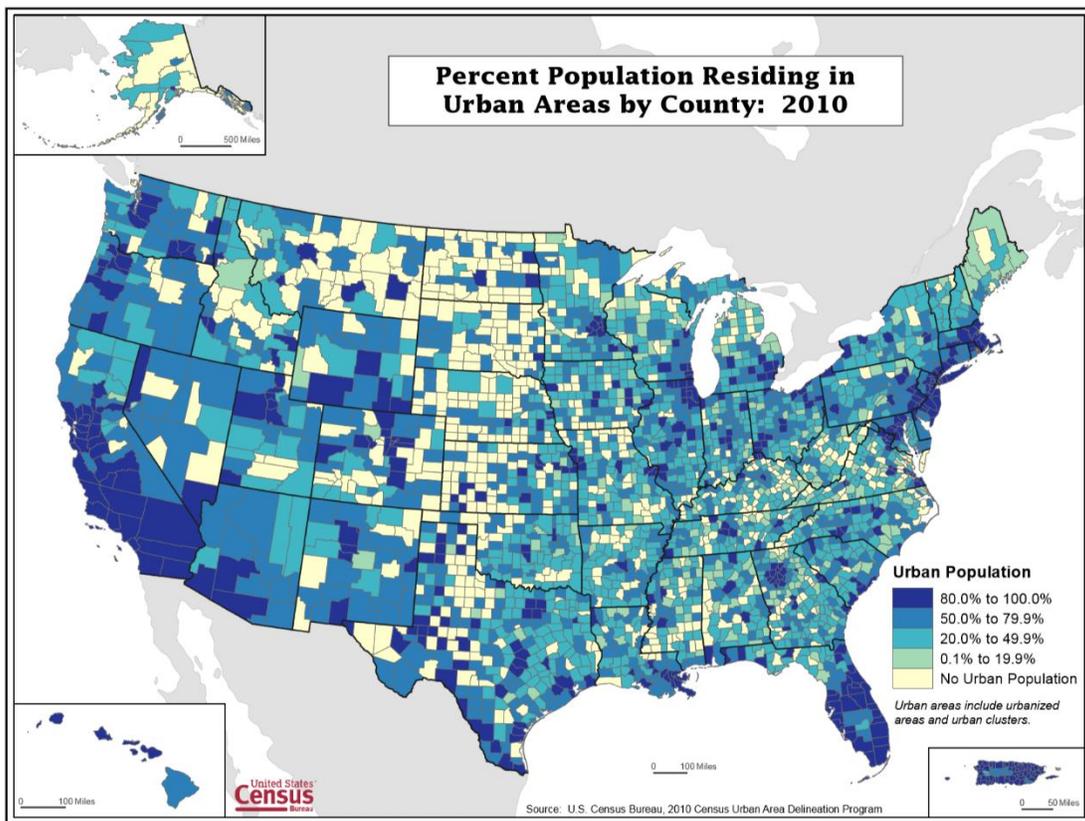
“Because of its obvious political benefits, “boosterism” remains the dominant tourism planning approach followed in the United States, indeed, it has been since the onset of mass tourism initiated in the 1950s” (Marcouiller, 2007). Within Loveland, initiatives aimed at “revitalizing” the town through tourism projects promote such ideologies.

Among content creation, the language used, target audience, and source selection, are indicative of how journalistic work adds to these notions. This research aims to influence those who participate in the news making process. Moreover, it suggests that these participants become aware of how journalistic power is relinquished when the news created empowers a social hegemonic structure. Most importantly, in recognizing such ideologies, journalism can become richer by empowering those groups that have “no voice.”

BACKGROUND

According to Encyclopædia Britannica (2015), Loveland is located in Northern Colorado. It's part of Larimer County. The city was founded in 1877. William A. H. Loveland was, at the time, the president of the Colorado Central Railroad. The city is named after him. "The city is a tourist base for nearby Estes Park, Roosevelt National Forest, and Rocky Mountain National Park" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015).

According to the United States Census Bureau (2015), the city holds an estimated population of 72, 651. In 2010, some of the race percentages were: 91.5% White alone, 0.6% Black or African American, 0.8% American Indian and Alaska Native, 1.0% Asian, and 11.7% Hispanic or Latino. The median household income is estimated to be \$54,977. There are roughly about 7,525 companies throughout Loveland (United States Census Bureau, 2015).



This paper is going to target Downtown Loveland. According to the city of Loveland website (2015), “The Downtown Loveland National Historic District reflects the evolution of the city’s commercial growth and exhibits the architectural evolution of Loveland’s ever changing commercial needs and tastes.”

While observing the work of three reporters, Downtown Loveland was a reoccurring topic. “At the heart of Loveland is Historic Downtown Loveland,” as stated on the Loveland Chamber of Commerce website (2015). At the core of many of the articles viewed, was the discussion of this region. The three reporters analyzed for the purposes of this research are: Saja Hindi, Dana Rieck, and Craig Young.

All three are staff writers at the Loveland Reporter-Herald. The paper reaches a circulation of “about 18,000,” said managing editor Jeff Stahla. In the 94th Annual Newspaper Data Book (2015), the Reporter-Herald’s circulation is noted as having a weekday and Saturday circulation of 18,848 and Sunday circulation of 21,866. However, the total circulation is 59,562. Currently the Reporter-Herald is owned by MediaNews Group. Previously, the newspaper company was owned by Prairie Mountain Publishing Company. The type of news covered in the paper ranges from sports, business, entertainment, and lifestyle topics. It’s the only daily newspaper in Loveland.

In addition, the audience is targeted towards the wealthier. Only 10% of Loveland is below the poverty level (United States Census Bureau, 2015). The perceived news audience the paper caters to could include white, middle class, and college level educated groups.

The reason for this deduction is established by analyzing the qualitative measures of the research gathered as opposed to the quantitative data. For example, Young’s writing focuses on

the business section. However, his writing style is directed to an audience of business owners or entrepreneurs. Many of his sources are local business owners, if not government officials. In the article “Downsizing Showtime makes room for more businesses”, all of Young’s sources are business owners (Young, 2015b). However, this approach neglects to tell how the downsizing will affect the residents or more specifically the residents within this region.

Loveland (city), Colorado

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	Loveland	Colorado
People QuickFacts		
Population, 2013 estimate	71,334	5,272,085
Population, 2010 (April 1) estimates base	66,824	5,029,324
Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013	6.7%	4.8%
Population, 2010	66,859	5,029,196
Persons under 5 years, percent, 2010	6.8%	6.8%
Persons under 18 years, percent, 2010	23.9%	24.4%
Persons 65 years and over, percent, 2010	14.9%	10.9%
Female persons, percent, 2010	51.7%	49.9%
White alone, percent, 2010 (a)	91.5%	81.3%
Black or African American alone, percent, 2010 (a)	0.6%	4.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, 2010 (a)	0.8%	1.1%
Asian alone, percent, 2010 (a)	1.0%	2.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent, 2010 (a)	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent, 2010	2.5%	3.4%
Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2010 (b)	11.7%	20.7%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2010	84.8%	70.0%
Living in same house 1 year & over, percent, 2009-2013	84.1%	80.7%
Foreign born persons, percent, 2009-2013	4.7%	9.7%
Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+, 2009-2013	8.3%	16.8%
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013	92.9%	90.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013	32.0%	37.0%
Veterans, 2009-2013	5,594	399,458
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16+, 2009-2013	24.7	24.5
Housing units, 2010	28,557	2,212,898
Homeownership rate, 2009-2013	64.2%	65.4%
Housing units in multi-unit structures, percent, 2009-2013	23.6%	25.9%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2009-2013	\$210,400	\$236,200
Households, 2009-2013	28,338	1,977,591
Persons per household, 2009-2013	2.41	2.53
Per capita money income in past 12 months (2013 dollars), 2009-2013	\$27,878	\$31,109
Median household income, 2009-2013	\$54,977	\$58,433
Persons below poverty level, percent, 2009-2013	10.5%	13.2%
Business QuickFacts		
Total number of firms, 2007	7,532	547,770
Black-owned firms, percent, 2007	S	1.7%
American Indian- and Alaska Native-owned firms, percent, 2007	S	0.8%
Asian-owned firms, percent, 2007	S	2.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-owned firms, percent, 2007	F	0.1%
Hispanic-owned firms, percent, 2007	4.6%	6.2%
Women-owned firms, percent, 2007	32.0%	29.2%
Manufacturers shipments, 2007 (\$1000)	563,586	46,331,953
Merchant wholesaler sales, 2007 (\$1000)	387,139	53,598,986
Retail sales, 2007 (\$1000)	1,211,747	65,896,788
Retail sales per capita, 2007	\$18,968	\$13,609
	128,615	11,440,395

The issues this paper focuses on include crime and urban development. The reporters analyzed have different areas of expertise ranging from police issues to business topics. However, much of their work intertwine with trending matters involving urban development initiatives.

The act of selecting the reporters was done at random. The process of choosing articles was based on a repetition of terms in headlines or keywords repeatedly found in the text of articles. For example, terms such as: downtown, Sprouts, DDA, urban, and task force.

“Statistical data have an important role in facilitating public understanding of social issues” (Lugo-Ocando & Brandão, 2015). The Reporter-Herald posted a survey asking readers questions in regards to natural grocery stores. At the time that this was issued on their website, there had yet to be any decision on whether a grocer would even settle in Loveland.

However, the language used to describe the possibility of the grocer coming to the city resembles self-confirming bias. “The unscientific survey, with 667 responses as of noon Monday, March 4, showed that 54 percent of the respondents said they buy organic and natural products regularly,” (Young, 2013). The headline: “The results are in: Lovelanders wish they had a Sprouts in town” neglects that this survey only considers the Reporter-Herald’s audience. Also, only the audience who access the site via online would be able to partake in the survey. So, it may not be representative of all Loveland residents. It resembles the paper’s internet audience.

The grocery store being considered was Sprouts. Much debate and media emphasis was placed on this. Even, two residents, who are business owners, decided to sue the city. Moreover, with the urban development plan the city has, it offers incentives for businesses to set roots in Loveland. “Evergreen Development will seek public assistance through a \$2.2 million loan and tax exemption of as much as \$97,000 from the city to move forward with the project.” (Hindi, 2014). This is typical of a city focusing on tourism projects to “revitalize” the city. “Tourism businesses tend to provide incentives for entrepreneurial behavior of individuals” (Marcouiller, 2007).

Moreover, there was also media emphasis placed on a “string of shootings” that occurred at the same time as the grocer debate. In following the narrative of the shootings, the spectacle seemed to resemble a police mystery novel. It exemplified a dramatic representation of violence. According to an interview with Rieck, “A police task force (in Loveland) is unheard of.”

In the end, driving the audience's attention to redevelopment initiatives while failing to include information on sources other than business owners or experts is damaging. Mostly, it's hurtful to the portrayal of news.

CONCEPT

While this paper deals with boosterism, it explores how journalism can work as a vessel. In doing so, it provides a machine which can relay messages. The information being passed along empowers some while failing to recognize others. This portrays journalism as a function that doesn't serve the "public," but aids in agenda-setting.

For example, choosing sources that are "experts" represents a significance that society places on the validity of information gathered from sources. Many of the articles dealing with police topics mostly had sources which were actual police officers or victims. However, rarely were those accused of crimes ever cited. This belittles the validity of people who are not defined as "experts." Moreover, it causes the audience to recognize stories from a limited standpoint. Powers and Fico (as cited in Reich 2011) found that, "According to one survey, journalists consider credibility to be the most influential factor in source selection, followed by source accessibility and time pressure."

Urban development efforts are considered part of a process in gentrification. This term indicates the process of redeveloping urban and/or rural areas to attract wealth, while in effect hurting disenfranchised groups. When the media "boosterizes" these issues it puts the audience's attention on this discussion. Gans (2004) states, "A concept that articulates how everyday news promotes mediatized notions of a community's dominant identities, boosterism is a vital function of the press to define a community's identities" (Gutsche, 2014a).

Along with content, language plays a significant role. Language in journalistic work can be a predominant factor in dissemination of the news. This analysis develops a conceptual framework in recognizing how journalism can assist a social hegemonic structure. Analyzing this news outlet, provides an example of various concepts. Gentrification, boosterism, and social hegemony are topics considered in this analysis. However, this research aims to direct the audience to a path less travelled.

This path considers that such ideologies are in place nowadays and carry much influence on the quality of journalism. While the articles observed for this research support the conclusions, a more extensive research could find even greater evidence of the concepts being established. The reason for this research is to guide journalists into a greater state of awareness. Through journalism, there is a great power at hand. This power is relinquished when news content, language, sources, etc., are limited to serving those at the head of the social hegemonic structure.

Journalists create the news and build a world in which the audience considers a reality. This reality can be viewed only through the lens which journalism chooses to project. However, the idea of multiple realities must also be tackled. As cited in Gutsche (2014b), “News medias’ role, then, becomes less about serving the public than about selling the public on dominant ideology through storytelling and narrative” (Bhabha, 1990). Journalism must continue to serve the public rather than sanctioning a dominant ideology.

The way news items are written may indicate how a narrative is aimed towards a specific group of people. According to Zelizer (2004), “Theorists interested in narrative helped bring certain notions about language to the fore, extrapolating on the need to consider both form and content.” The form of the articles used for this research were considered when reaching the concept. Audiences may derive many meanings based on the nature of the text being used in

journalistic works. However, the discourse applied in the news limit the meanings that an audience can arise to.

To reiterate, newsworthiness, source selection, and perceived dominant news audience, are all contributing factors to developing journalism. However, the methodology applied to determine these characteristics come with many social connotations. This may give some evidence in recognizing social structures. More specifically, this concept applies to the journalism field. “There also seems to be, based on our findings, a faster pace of information, which creates repetition in a sort of mimicry within the general news media of what those in power want them to say” (Lugo-Ocando & Brandão, 2015)

METHOD

The research method applied in this paper aspired to explain a possibility of boosterism occurring on a local level. Moreover, signs of boosterism in the town’s daily paper indicate how journalism may portray issues in favor of promoting a social hierarchy. Upon beginning to explore these concerns, it was necessary to gather information about the newspaper itself.

In addition to this, the town’s demographics are essential in comprehending the concept. In interviewing some residents of Loveland the research considers a possible framework embedded in the journalistic process. The purpose in recognizing this framework is to recognize a continuous cycle occurring throughout journalistic works.

The methodology if this paper is set to imply and furthermore reinforce the constant tactics that are underway. Such as the frameworks behind source selection, language, and news content. Burd (2008) argued, “Business news, advertisements, and “boosteristic” editorials related to places

and people capture the economic interests of local employers, tourism officials, and residents interested in bolstering a geography's economic viability" (Shumow & Gutsche, 2015).

Upon gathering information, connections and patterns were identified. These patterns resemble a drive towards gentrification. Additionally, when considering other journalistic and scholarly works, it's possible to accept the scope of this research. This paper includes a content analysis of specific news items created by three journalists. The articles reviewed included pieces that discussed crime and tourism. Also, an evaluation of the sources used in these pieces was observed. 90 articles were gathered to derive this analysis.

The purpose in analyzing the content of these articles was to gain an understanding of some trending concerns in Loveland. The basis of these "trends" is recognized in the emphasis given to the newsworthiness of these items. This concept allows the ability to judge the methodology applied by these three journalists when creating news about their city.

The individuals that were interviewed were asked questions that would empower this research. Two store owners, one journalist, and one city official were interviewed. All participants were asked similar questions and given anonymity if requested. The type of questions asked were mostly open ended questions which allowed for discussion of specific topics to arise. The interviews lasted between 5-10 minutes long and were recorded with consent.

DISCUSSION

To strike an interest in the analytic discussion of this paper, the concept of boosterism within a local news outlet was selected. The ideas discussed are merely meant to influence readers into considering the possibility of how such an ideology can be considered among journalistic work. The selection of this particular news outlet was based on random selection. Similarly to the

selection of the reporters examined. Recognizing news issues within this framework in mind can lead to realizing how some topics can resemble the notions being made in this paper.

This ideology is scrutinized by observing patterns within the news items analyzed. These patterns were based on source selection, dominant news audience, and newsworthiness. Observing these characteristics next to demographics of the city and the Reporter-Herald demonstrate the concept.

The decision to use “expert” sources in journalism can be driven by social cues. “One key criterion determining a person’s chances of becoming a news source and having a public voice is the extent to which he or she is assessed by journalists as credible (Detjen et al., 2000; Gans, 1979; Goldenber, 1975) (as cited in Reich, 2011). For example, using police officials as sources tends to occur because police are considered to be accountable. Also, journalists tend to build relationships with officers, especially within investigative journalism. This overreliance in police involvement in news resembles traditional processes applied by the media.

Additionally, by observing the way news is delivered in the sense of context, the wordage applied in news work plays a significant role in shaping the message that the audience develops. By using a narrative that portrays tourism initiatives as a benefit to the city, journalists imply that city developments are good. However, concepts like gentrification signal that redeveloping plans have previously done a disservice to people in minority groups. “If the benefits of gentrification are indeed real, this would represent just one more way that minority communities are deprived of economic opportunities” (Horowitz, 2015).

Both of these frameworks imply who the dominant news audience of a particular news establishment is. By inadvertently selecting sources or depicting text in articles as a narrative that uses setting or other elements to influence the judgements made by readers, journalists are

neglecting to provoke the discussion of the possibility that news may offer a plethora of realities. These stories may become more apparent if news didn't serve those at the top of an oligarchical social structure.

CONCLUSION

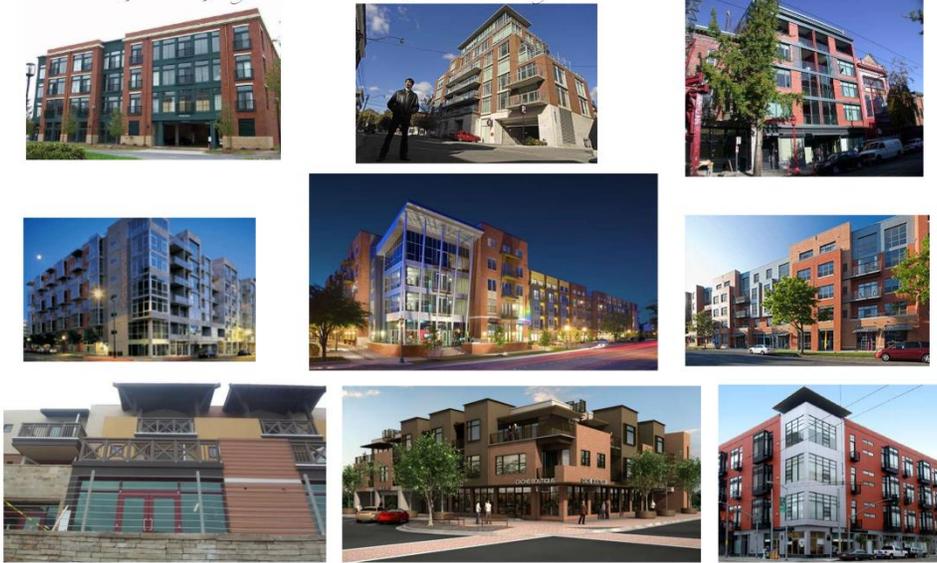
The concept of this paper was chosen because it considers an ideology that continues to resonate within journalism. Moreover, boosterism has become more of a perpetual framework that is considered part of a traditional background of journalism. By thinking about the characteristics of this paper and applying it to a news outlet in a small local town, the research has considered how journalistic tactics carry much influence on their audience. Moreover, social implications are also witnessed within the industry.

The goal of this paper is to recognize that even within journalism society may influence an industry that is considered objective or that is supposed to serve the public. Additionally, news doesn't benefit the entire public if it continues to serve the "top of the food chain." By analyzing these news items, this medium can expand. Expanding journalistic work to include the views of minority groups enriches the quality. It should aim to be inclusive. In becoming aware of the intricacies involved with source selection, audience, and language, journalists can promote media as a true power of the public.

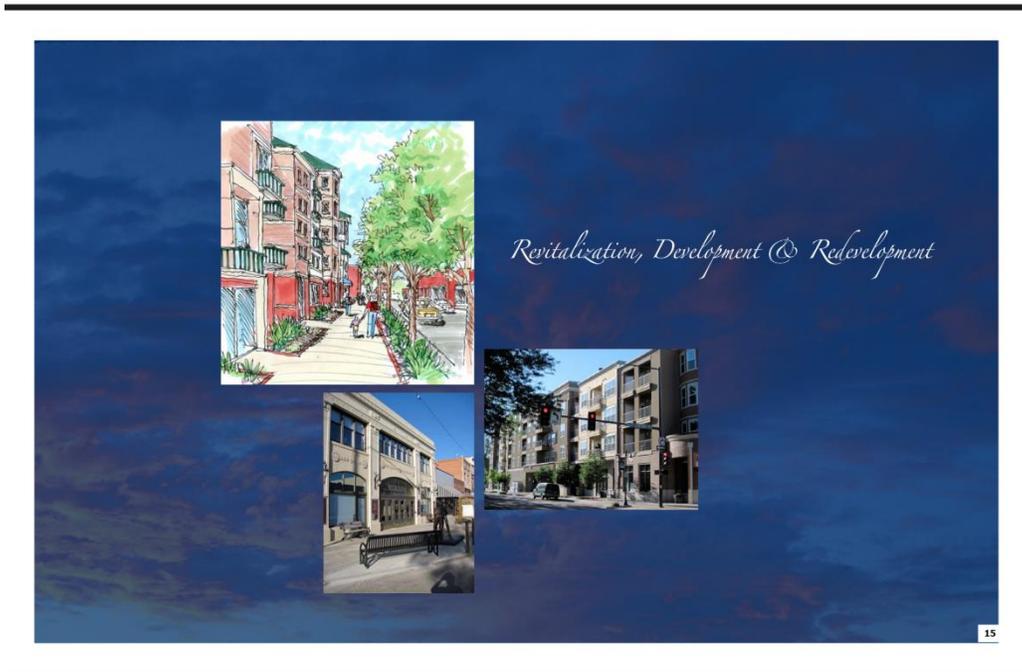
Moreover, these efforts must be persistent even when facing conflict because traditionally these voices have been left out of the news. Journalism should promote conversation amongst the community and allow for the exchange of a variety of views. Objectivity should still be pursued, however, subjectivity enters this realm with word choice and narrative. Living in a digital world, journalists must expand their knowledge, their tactics, and efforts quicker because of the

importance given to immediacy. In the end, this could lead to an era where views aren't judged and denied hastily. Likewise, this will allow for discourse to arise.

Typical Examples of Urban Architecture Styles and Character for the North and South Catalist Projects



Images were retrieved from the Redevelopment and Revitalization of Downtown Loveland Vision Book



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