Revitalization of Public Health at Yale:

Strategic Goals and Objectives for the

Yale School of Public Health

Department of Epidemiology and Public Health
in the
Yale School of Medicine

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THE MISSION AND VISION OF YALE’S SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

“Public health is not a branch of medicine or of engineering but a profession dedicated to a community service which involves the cooperative effort of a score of different disciplines.”
C-E.A. Winslow

The School’s Mission

The mission statement adopted by the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) in 2002 states: “The School of Public Health at Yale provides leadership to protect and improve the health of the public. Through innovative research, policy analysis, and education that draw upon multidisciplinary scholarship from across graduate and professional programs at Yale, the School serves local, national, and international communities with its knowledge and expertise.”

The increasingly complex nature of health challenges and the multiple factors that affect health have highlighted the need for improved leadership and better governance of health. At a national level, health and health care issues are taking center stage in scientific and policy debates. Specific issues that are widely and frequently discussed include the need for comprehensive reform of the health care delivery and financing systems, the growing prevalence and consequences of obesity, the global spread of infectious diseases such as drug-resistant tuberculosis and avian influenza, the emergence and persistence of HIV/AIDS, the impacts of tobacco and substance abuse, and growing disparities in health among various populations. Increasingly, federal agencies and the public recognize that many of these challenges to the health of the U.S. population have their roots in global processes and will require global solutions.

On our own campus, interest in health issues is burgeoning among undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral trainees, as evidenced by demand for existing courses and additional offerings in the Health Studies Program. Likewise, faculty members across the campus are focusing their scholarly efforts and research programs on health issues.

YSPH, by virtue of its mission and its history, is uniquely suited to meet the growing demand for education and research focused upon health and to provide the leadership and train the leaders needed to address national and global health issues. YSPH faculty, representing multiple disciplines, including medicine, epidemiology, biostatistics, psychology, anthropology, economics, and political science, currently engage in major policy, advisory, and research initiatives throughout the world. Additionally, Yale University’s strong tradition of fostering broad faculty collaborations and interdisciplinary exchange facilitates the development of robust teaching partnerships and research collaborations between YSPH faculty and colleagues throughout the campus who are interested in health issues.

In this document I describe my vision and objectives for the YSPH and general strategies for achieving greater excellence in the three major types of activity in which faculty are engaged: research, education, and public health practice. For each strategy I report progress to date. I conclude with my general recommendations for future activities to continue improvements in all of YSPH’s pursuits.
Revitalization of Public Health at Yale

Prior to coming to Yale as the new Dean of Public Health in the summer of 2006, I reviewed carefully the report of the Review of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health led by Dean Peter Salovey in 2004 (this report was presented to the Corporation Educational Policy Committee in December of 2004), as well as a Strategic Plan for the School that was prepared by YSPH faculty in 2005. I also interviewed numerous individuals in the Yale community, including staff, students, and faculty at the School of Public Health.

I concluded that although there were numerous outstanding scientists in the School, the level of scholarship was uneven. In addition, I thought that the School’s scientific programs could have greater impact and visibility if they were more strategically focused and developed. I also concluded that the School’s programs would benefit from strengthening its relationships with other parts of the School of Medicine and other parts of Yale. Finally, I identified opportunities to improve the School’s education and public health practice programs.

Faculty at the Yale School of Public Health engage in three major types of activity: research, education, and public health practice. Schools of public health in the U.S. engage in these same activities but differ greatly in the extent to which they emphasize each. I think that School activities should be guided by, and build upon, the unique strengths of Yale University. Yale is one of the great research universities in the United States and has one of the most highly regarded educational programs in the world. Therefore, Yale’s School of Public Health should aspire, first and foremost, to have one of the top research programs in the country. Moreover, as is the case in other great research universities and elsewhere at Yale, the School’s educational programs should both take advantage of and reinforce its research activities. It follows from this vision that the educational experiences of students will be maximized if the admission process selects the types of students who value the research focus of the School and the scholarly work being done by the School’s faculty. Similarly, the School’s engagement and training in public health practice should leverage the skills and careers of our leading faculty. Finally, as is the case in any complex organization, these goals need to be supported and facilitated by excellent policies and management systems and a sound financial foundation. In summary, the strategic goals for the School that underpin the vision I described above include:

Enhance Research Excellence for Knowledge and Impact

Maximize Student Experiences

Focus and Coordinate Practice and Service Activities

Improve Management and Infrastructure

Improve the Financial Foundation of School Activities

Create a Recognized and Respected “Brand” for Potential Faculty, Students, and Supporters
On the following pages, I elaborate on these goals and objectives, as well as the strategies we have adopted to achieve them, and the current status of each initiative.

**FIVE YEAR (2006-2011) REVITALIZATION PLAN**

**Strategic Goal: Enhance Research Excellence for Knowledge and Impact**

YSPH should aspire to conduct world-class research and generate knowledge and strategies that can be translated into better health domestically and abroad, thus placing YSPH among the leading schools of public health in the country with regard to research achievements. The research we do should span from basic to applied research and our ultimate goal should be to improve the health of individuals in local and global communities.

**Objective 1: Focus research programs**

There are many outstanding scholars at the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH, the School), but the level of scholarship has been uneven. Furthermore, the work of many faculty members has been less visible and has had less impact than possible because the research activities in many areas are diffuse. The work of the faculty would have a greater impact if the School’s research, education, and service efforts were more sharply focused in areas where the faculty have the greatest expertise and if changes were made in the School’s organizational structure to better support these areas of strategic focus. These objectives are consistent with the conclusions of the Review Committee report, which recommended that “the leadership and faculty of EPH should develop a strategic plan clearly focused on a limited set of research areas as priorities.” They are also consistent with Yale’s core principle of “selective excellence,” which, according to President Richard Levin should guide programs to be “…shaped more by an aspiration to excellence than a compulsion to comprehensiveness…”

Developing areas of excellence does not necessarily imply reducing commitment to, or resources available for, areas not emphasized. It does require, however, that additional resources should be used to develop areas where those resources can have the greatest impact. “Areas of excellence” can be disciplinary, substantive, or both. Current strong research programs exist in genomic and proteomic research, respiratory health, HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care, cancer epidemiology and prevention, biostatistics, parasitic and vector borne diseases, and health care policy and management.

**Strategy:** Conduct targeted reviews of programs in most problematic divisions.

**Status:** External reviews of the Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases and Global Health Division were completed in 2007.

The committee reviewing the Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases Division (EMD) noted many strengths of the existing program at YSPH and related programs in other parts of the School of Medicine. It concluded, however, that vector biology research is not as strong as it has been in the past, that there should be more synergy between what the lab
and non-lab EMD faculty are working on, and that there should be more programmatic
grants and research interactions to maximize the impact of the Division.

The committee concluded that strategic foci for the future should include recruiting
senior faculty with expertise in infectious diseases epidemiology who understand and
appreciate the benefits of integrating epidemiology and laboratory approaches. They also
concluded that EMD faculty research and educational activities should be integrated into
global health efforts at Yale.

In response, we are recruiting a senior faculty member with demonstrated expertise to
lead and integrate multidisciplinary research programs that bridge laboratory and field
research efforts. The EMD faculty are also members of a new school-wide Global Health
Program.

The committee reviewing the Global Health Division (GHD) noted that the Division did
not have a permanent leader, had only a few faculty members, had a lack of institutional
focus, and was the subject of broad-based concerns on the part of students, faculty, and
other members of the Yale community.

The committee recommended that YSPH dissolve the existing Division of Global Health
and incorporate its existing faculty into other Divisions. The also suggested that we
develop a consensus perspective among Division chairs in EPH as to the “global” nature
of their mission and subject matter and encourage them to take a leadership role with a
global perspective and establish a cross-divisional structure. The committee also
suggested that we recruit at least 3 additional faculty with a global focus in the next few
years. Finally, the committee recommended that we re-constitute the global health track
for the MPH and made recommendations regarding that program.

In response, we have dissolved the Division of Global Health and created a school-wide
Global Health Program, currently directed by a global health committee. We had
previously decided not to enroll MPH students in global health in the fall of 2007 and the
fall of 2008 to allow the Program time to develop. We are about to start recruiting new
faculty with global health interests and plan to reopen an MPH concentration in global
health in the fall of 2009.

Strategy: School-wide strategic planning.

Status: Ongoing

Objective 2: Encourage and facilitate programmatic scholarship

It is inevitable and desirable that many faculty research activities will be initiated for reasons
unrelated to any programmatic foci developed within or across the Divisions in the YSPH.
Nevertheless, in certain cases, helping faculty to develop areas of research that are aligned with
broader programmatic themes could enhance the level and impact of individual scholarship,
strengthen synergies among faculty members, and facilitate the identification of research support. We will therefore continue to work with faculty to identify such opportunities.

On a related note, much of the research that will have the most substantial impact on population health involves interactions between investigators with expertise in specific disciplines (e.g. biostatistics) and researchers with a primary interest in substantive or clinical issues (e.g. cancer). YSPH currently has strong programs of research on HIV/AIDS, perinatal health, asthma and allergy, mental health and substance abuse, and cancer that rely upon this model. Reinforcing these programs of research and/or identifying intellectual leaders who are committed to developing additional programs in identified areas will be essential for the proposed revitalization strategy. For example, several faculty are currently doing research on mental health and substance abuse, and a more programmatic approach to issues in this area could have several of the advantages described above. Similarly, a program in global infectious diseases might help focus and reinforce work by vector biologists and parasitologists in the YSPH and facilitate collaboration with related scholars in the Yale School of Medicine (YSM).

**Strategy:** Conduct faculty searches by programmatic area rather than Division. Restructure the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS (CIRA). Develop research programs in global infectious diseases and analytic sciences.

**Status:** Two programmatic searches have been started (HIV and genomics). CIRA reorganization completed, new application submitted, and funding pending. Global infectious diseases program started and analytic sciences program planned for spring of 2008.

**Objective 3:** Encourage and support University-wide and other strategic collaborations

The School’s research excellence and impact could also be enhanced by expanded collaboration between YSPH faculty and other faculty in the YSM, the broader University, and at University affiliates, such as the Veterans Administration Connecticut Healthcare System. Such an approach would be consistent with President Levin’s Fourth Century vision that we “…take advantage of the substantial interconnectedness among our schools, departments, and programs.”

Work on complex health problems often requires the use of knowledge and research methods from diverse disciplines. Thus, one way to strengthen research at the YSPH is to encourage and support interdisciplinary research between faculty in different schools and academic departments at Yale. The focus of these activities would depend on decisions about programmatic foci within YSPH, but examples of potential collaborations include research on childhood obesity with the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, teaching and scholarship in health law with the Yale Law School, and involvement in global health activities across the campus.

Although collaborative programs are intellectually appealing, they are sometimes challenging to implement effectively and support financially. Therefore, initial resources for program management and coordination and pilot funds may be needed. Any such investments would be directed toward those initiatives for which there is a reasonable expectation that the initiative
would be self-sustaining within three years and that the resulting program would be more intellectually and financially viable than existing, independent efforts.

One collaborative initiative that holds significant promise and that may warrant early investment is an Analytic Sciences Unit. If properly planned and led, such a unit could strengthen existing basic biostatistics and epidemiological research in the School, provide support for collaborative clinical and health services research with the YSM, and serve as a core facility for junior investigators in all departments of the YSM. Furthermore, in addition to advancing the scientific mission of the School, such an initiative may increase the likelihood of obtaining external support for research activities. The number and type of faculty, administrators, and programming staff to be hired will be determined after a more complete business plan for the Unit is developed. Such a plan should include estimates of the potential use of, and funds available for, Analytic Sciences Unit activities.

**Strategy:** Establish statistical consulting unit, or “Analytic Sciences Unit (ASU).”

**Status:** There have been numerous discussions with colleagues in YSM regarding structure and functions of an ASU. A review of what is needed to develop the Unit as an Internal Service Provider (ISP) has been completed. Initial funding has been identified. Expected to start in July 2008.

**Strategy:** Form stronger links in genomics research.

**Status:** A new genomics collaboration with YSM faculty has been started.

**Strategy:** Strengthen VA links.

**Status:** Multiple meetings with VA have been held. Joint teaching activities and joint genomics and biostatistics searches have been initiated.

**Strategy:** Develop health law program.

**Status:** Discussions are underway with Yale Law School Dean Harold Koh and Associate Dean Barnett.

**Strategy:** Develop stronger links with Schools of Management and Forestry and Environmental Studies (FES).

**Status:** We reached an agreement with the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and the Departments of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Geology and Geophysics to jointly recruit an infectious disease ecologist. The position was designed to bridge the academic and intellectual gap between ecology and medical epidemiology by fostering interdisciplinary research and training. The position is partially funded by the Yale Institute for Biospheric Studies through the newly formed Center for EcoEpidemiology.
After a national search, we were delighted that we were able to recruit Dr. Maria Diuk-Wasser. Professor Diuk-Wasser is interested in modeling the environmental and ecological drivers of vector-borne and zoonotic diseases using intensive field and laboratory-derived data. Her current areas of interest include generating a spatial risk map of Lyme disease in the United States and of West Nile virus (WNV) in Connecticut and studying how climate, landscape and host diversity affect vector host-feeding behavior, in turn affecting transmission dynamics and pathogen genetic diversity. Her disease study systems are WNV, Lyme disease and malaria. Other interests include landscape ecology and genetics, animal behavior, and conservation biology.

We have regular meetings with the School of Management to improve our joint MPH program and discuss research collaborations.

**Objective 4:** Maximize the excellence of individual faculty

Although efforts to focus research activities and to facilitate collaborations can leverage the excellence and influence of YSPH’s existing faculty, optimizing YSPH’s research distinction requires expanding the excellence of faculty through key recruitments. In addition, the School must create and maintain structures and procedures that support faculty in achieving their full potential as scholars and leaders.

**Strategy:** Enhance scholarship through selective recruitment of leading scholars.

An example of an area in which several faculty are currently engaged and where there are tremendous opportunities for enhancing excellence and interdisciplinary collaborations is genetics. This is an area where both YSM and YSPH have nationally regarded scholars, where collaborative work is necessary to have the greatest impact, where there are major opportunities for scientific breakthroughs, and where the probability of obtaining external funding for activities is high. Activity in the Genetics Department is limited by the availability of expertise in epidemiology and biostatistics that could be provided by additional YSPH faculty. Other new areas for recruitment, e.g., microbial diseases and health management, have been identified by previous or recent programmatic reviews.

**Status:** Senior searches have been approved and active: Genetics, HIV, and Biostatistics. Two junior searches in Microbial Diseases and Health Management have been completed successfully.

**Strategy:** Better junior faculty mentoring.

**Status:** Meetings have been held with both senior and junior faculty regarding junior faculty mentoring. The Appointment and Promotions committee now routinely reviews every junior faculty member to identify opportunities for strengthening their research and teaching skills and achievements. The school is currently reviewing mentoring programs throughout the country and I plan to develop and submit a draft mentoring plan to the faculty for consideration at the beginning of the 2008-2009 academic year.
Strategic Goal: Maximize Student Experiences

The YSPH operates or contributes substantially to educational programs that lead to the MPH, MD, MS, and PhD degrees and participates in several postdoctoral training programs. It is essential, and in alignment with the University’s mission, that the experiences of students participating in these various education experiences be of the highest possible quality. An independent, but related, goal is to ensure that YSPH admits students who will benefit most from the YSPH educational experience, namely students who have the highest academic qualifications, an appreciation for the research university setting, and prior public health experience, and who will contribute to the diversity of YSPH community. Evidence of success in achieving these aspirations would include improvement in the qualifications of the applicant pool and higher retention rates of the most qualified students.

The YSPH Strategic Plan describes numerous issues that need to be addressed to enhance the educational experience for all levels of students and trainees. In addition to reviewing those issues, I convened an internal Working Group to review the MPH program and recently convened a Working Group to review the Ph.D. Program.

Objective 1: Increase faculty involvement in MPH activities

Strategy: Learn about student experiences and relay suggestions to faculty.

Status: The Dean meets every year with students from every division and program and subsequently with faculty.

Strategy: Improve “fit” between students and faculty interests.

Status: Recommendations from the MPH Working Group and meetings with faculty have resulted in modifications to admissions criteria, with more emphasis on experience in public health or related fields. As a result, the current class is substantially smaller than classes in recent years. Initial feedback is very positive.

Strategy: Develop plans to enhance communication with students.

Status: Routine town hall meetings are now held, an electronic newsletter has been started; the Dean attends student events.

Objective 2: Improve the MPH curriculum

Strategy: Hire a new Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and revise curriculum.

Strategy: Meet with faculty from each division and program, with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, to discuss concerns about curriculum
Status: The MPH Working Group made several recommendations to improve the curriculum which are now being implemented. Dr. Robert Dubrow was appointed as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in 2007.

**Objective 3:** Improve integration with other Yale PhD programs.

**Strategy:** Evaluate the desirability of School faculty becoming members of the Combined Program in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences (BBS).

Status: The Dean met with BBS leaders. Joining BBS is under consideration by the public health doctoral committee.

**Strategic Goal:** Focus and Coordinate Practice and Service Activities

Service activities are critical to the mission of the School and the education of its students. Furthermore, improving and invigorating service activities is necessary to maintain accreditation. These imperatives must be balanced against the need to develop other academic activities in the school and the availability of financial support for such activities. Difficulties to date in planning and executing service activities have stemmed in part from differences of opinion on the part of public health officials and national organizations, as well as among YSPH faculty and students regarding what constitutes “service.” Definitions of “service” can range from volunteering for community activities and consulting with local and state agencies to participating in research projects that involve community members or issues. In the past, there has not been a consensus regarding what constitutes a “public health practice experience,” as required for accreditation.

**Objective 1:** Develop YSPH definitions of service and practice activities.

**Strategy:** Conduct a comprehensive review of relevant activities at both the YSPH and the YSM and compare them to faculty and student interests to develop a shared vision of the kind of activities we consider public health service. One focus of that review would be to identify activities that could form a programmatic approach to community involvement and that could be financially self-sustaining.

Status: Review and report completed in 2007

A YSPH Public Health Practice committee developed a report that defined the types of activities that should be considered “public health practice.” The report also led to the development of a plan that addresses the criteria of the schools of public health accreditation agency, strengthens the summer internship, and provides students with more flexibility to meet their public health practice requirement, with three options. A summer internship will still be required of all students, but only those internships certified as practice experiences, according to well-defined criteria, by the Director of the newly formed Office of Community Health (OCH) will meet the practice requirement. Students can also meet their requirement through two current courses that were certified as meeting the practice requirement by the Director of OCH. A third way of meeting the public health practice requirement is through a practice placement. Such placements are a practice experience, paid or volunteer, during the academic year. We now require that each
practice placement be certified as a practice experience, according to well-defined criteria. Practice placements will be offered under the auspices of a course entitled Public Health Practicum.

**Objective 2:** Develop a position description and reactivate the search for a Public Health Practitioner

**Strategy:** Convene a committee to develop a position description, that comports with the recommendations in the public health service report and launch a nationwide search.

**Status:** A position application was developed and approved, and a search was started in 2008.

**Objective 3:** Develop a sustainable model for community service activities.

**Strategy:** Focus and coordinate domestic activities on programs that have the potential of resulting in improvements in health in New Haven. Establish Community Alliance for Research an Engagement (CARE) and seek funding for activities.

**Status:** Initial activities of CARE, supported by Yale Center for Clinical Investigation, are underway. Prospects for additional funding are very good. Efforts are underway to develop coordinated activities to support prevention and clinical research.

**Strategic Goal: Improve Management and Infrastructure**

The YSPH has well developed administrative structures and procedures, and appears to be well run. Based on interviews I conducted with numerous faculty, staff, and students, I determined that an area that could be improved and made more professional is the management of the YSPH Divisions. This aspiration can be achieved in part by affording faculty Division Heads more protected time to focus on programmatic development, to access and address the quality of educational programs, and to work with senior faculty to provide more support and guidance to junior faculty. It will also be advanced through the development of a more consistent and professional model of administrative support. This will be difficult given current financial constraints. One focus of fundraising activities will be to generate more stable support for such activities.

Space for research and teaching is a major issue at the YSPH. There are several pressing needs that need to be addressed soon. The most pressing is the condition of the facilities at 60 College Street. Five floors need to be renovated, an upgrade that was initially planned approximately ten years ago. Other proximate needs include more classroom space, common space for students, space for new recruitments, and space for faculty and staff in new programs including the Analytic Sciences Unit. There also are major problems with the configuration of the current space. For example, approximately 30 percent of the space is off campus and the administrative offices are dispersed in two separate buildings. The current arrangement is problematic because it is not financially efficient and inhibits certain types of administrative and scientific interactions.
**Objective 1:** Improve effectiveness and efficiency of management

**Strategy:** Develop comprehensive space plan for initial renovations and new space.

Status: A space plan has been completed. Several research groups have been moved with considerable consolidation, and construction has started at 60 College Street.

**Strategy:** Develop models of shared resources.

Research in the YSPH is data intensive and involves extensive statistical computing. To conduct such research effectively and efficiently requires a high quality, state of the art computing facility. Many faculty are currently doing computing on personal computers, which is inefficient both in terms of the time necessary for certain analytic tasks and the costs of purchasing and maintaining statistical software. Creating a core computing facility will be an important factor in helping the School to recruit top faculty and would be critical to support the work of the proposed Analytic Sciences Unit (ASU). A single facility could support most of the computing in the YSPH, and the depreciation and operating costs could be billed to grants once an accounting model has been developed. Such a facility could also support computing in the broader YSM community, if that was consistent with YSM needs.

Status: Invested in multi-node clusters in the W. M. Keck Foundation Biotechnology Resource Laboratory for biostatistics genomics research. We will test the concept further with the new ASU.

**Strategy:** Develop explicit policies for teaching credit and reimbursement for courses at YSPH and other units at Yale.


**Strategy:** Review the functions and operations of the public health library.

Status: Review underway.

**Strategic Goal: Improve the Financial Foundation of School Activities**

Developing a sound and rational financial model for activities at the YSPH is critical for sustaining its activities and achieving its mission.

**Objective 1:** Increase training grant support for graduate students

**Strategy:** Initiate review of financial support and incentives for training grants and other forms of student support.

Status: Review of financial aspects completed, programmatic review underway.
**Objective 2:** Develop a financial model to improve efficient allocation of discretionary resources for research and teaching

Status: An initial model was developed and reviewed by senior administrators. An initial presentation was made to senior faculty in May, 2008. The model will next be presented to all faculty and then the details finalized and implemented during the 2008-2009 academic year.

**Objective 3:** Evaluate Faculty Salaries

Status: An analysis was conducted comparing YSPH salaries with YSM salaries. The review indicated that YSPH was compensating faculty at lower levels than comparable institutions. In 2007, salaries increased more than inflation. Comparative data are now reviewed annually.

**Objective 4:** Increase Endowment

**Strategy:** Devote more effort to development activities. The availability of a new development professional assigned to the YSPH, Marty Klein, has greatly facilitated that work.

Status: Efforts are on-going.

**Objective 5:** Develop Dean’s Council

Status: On hold, pending other changes and activities.

**Strategic Goal: Create a Recognized and Respected “Brand” for Potential Faculty, Students, and Supporters**

**Strategy:** Develop University consensus about appropriate name use.

Status: A policy has been developed and adopted.

**Strategy:** Develop plans to enhance communication.

Status: We now hold routine town hall meetings and “random” lunches with staff. An electronic newsletter is now distributed regularly.

**Strategy:** Hire communications expert.

Status: A new Director of External Affairs was hired in 2007, but this effort was unsuccessful. A revised position description was developed and posted. The new position will focus on content development to better complement the activities of the Office of Public Affairs (OPA). An individual has been hired and will start in June, 2008.

**Strategy:** Develop coherent and compelling set of communications materials and approaches.
Status: Pending new communications person.

The Next Three Years

Making substantial changes in a large, complex organization is necessarily slow. However, we think we have made significant progress towards most of our objectives and intend to continue focused, strategic planning for our research programs; maintain our commitment to educational excellence; and to sustain our dedication to having a positive impact on health through local and global programs. We recently hired a strategic planning consultant who has interviewed faculty, staff, and students regarding the changes we have made and the challenges on which we should focus in the future. Once we have received a report from that review we will refine our strategic plans for the remainder of the revitalization period.