



Creating a Sense of Place in Midtown Tallahassee, Florida

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Introduction

Sense of Place

–“The social and geographical context of place bonds [emotional and functional attachment] and the sensing of places, such as aesthetics and a feeling of dwelling”.¹

Background

American cities are struggling with a public health crisis that includes the negative consequences of a sedentary lifestyle and depression due to feelings of isolation.⁴ Planners are looking towards urban design strategies to help create a sense of place to increase physical activity levels and connect individuals to their communities. Planners in Tallahassee, Florida, produced the 2011 Midtown Action Plan in an effort to explore how a sense of place could be developed in the Midtown area.

Research Questions

1. How is a **sense of place** created?
2. Does a strong sense of place amongst nearby residents translate to a high level of place attachment but a low level of resource dependence?
3. How can a sense of place be created in Midtown Tallahassee, Florida?

Hypothesis

–An immediate high-density resident population creates a sense of place through their experiences of place attachment and resource dependency.



Figure 3. Focus Area
Adapted from the 2011 Midtown Action Plan

Preliminary Results

“I would hate to see high-density apartment buildings go in... I just think it would lose its sense of place.” – Interviewee A

- Pedestrian travel and walking was mentioned 121 times, the most of any category.²
- Urban design/aesthetics was mentioned 91 times though it was not named in the plan as a major public comments category.²
- Even when not asked about pedestrian infrastructure, 2 interviewees addressed this topic numerous times (Subject A: 20; Subject B: 13).
- Regarding sense of place, Subject A said high-density housing must not be constructed.

Public Comments Analysis: Theme Counts

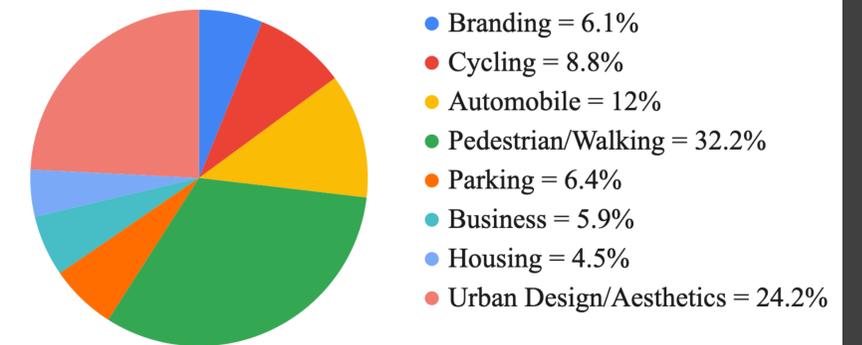


Figure 5. Content Analysis Graph



Figure 1. Midtown Action Plan Cover Page Logo
Adapted from the 2011 Midtown Action Plan



Figure 2. Red Eye Coffee, a popular destination for pedestrians
Adapted from Rent Tally



Figure 4. Researcher photo; Tallahassee, FL 2021

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- Based on the overwhelming number of public comments, the City of Tallahassee should continue to encourage more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly design into the Midtown area. 2021 was a year of significant progress in this regard; however, connectivity between sidewalks is still lacking.²
- Though not highlighted in the appendix of the original plan as a main category, the public provided feedback about the importance of the urban design/aesthetics of Midtown, including keeping Midtown quaint and preserving local trees.
- Despite the importance of housing in creating a sense of place, the public and an interviewee did not view high-density housing as a major issue.
- Future research should look at the public’s sense of place priorities for 2022 as well as their opinion regarding whether Midtown is a transient population or a community with substantial potential for long-term residence.

Methods

- **Conducted a literature review** of Urban Planning academic journals and reports
- **Performed a content analysis** of the comments from the Midtown Action Plan’s public workshops
- **Interviewed business owners in Midtown**
- **Surveyed business owners** who were interviewed
- **Performed Coding Analyses of mentions of themes** that appeared frequently throughout the public comments and interviews
- **Reviewed news articles** regarding Midtown’s developmental history

References

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