The Sustainable Development of Collegetown

Ava Jowers, Olivia Rodrigue, Cameron Mullin

Dr. Crystal Taylor and Samantha Murray, FSU College of Social Science and Public Policy

Research Question

How sustainable is the recent CollegeTown development based on the three E's?

Background

Prior to 2012, the Gaines Street corridor consisted of little more than outdated warehouses and vacant lots. After a massive financial undertaking by the city of Tallahassee, promoted by a host of private investments, the CollegeTown area that the Tallahassee community knows today was developed in short order. Due to an increased awareness of issues surrounding the environment, cities are looking towards sustainable development practices to minimize environmental externalities associated with growth. Increased public awareness of environmental issues led researchers to assess the potential impacts of projects through the three E's of sustainable development: Environment, Economy, and Equity.

Sustainability within the environment of CollegeTown experienced small implementations over the years and exploring solar energy adds to the value of CollegeTown's sustainability. Economically, CollegeTown real estate has seen sizable changes in property values since completion. This economic growth has manifested relatively little growth in income for the residents of the CollegeTown area. Historically, residents of the Gaines Street Corridor have experienced relatively high levels of poverty, with the majority of households pulling in fewer than $10,000 in annual income (based on data from 2010).

Methodology

Researching the Tallahassee Clean Energy Plan and the Tallahassee Solar Program structured the findings along with the more specific mapping of city of Tallahassee solar panels to track solar panel use along with their wattage use.

To analyze the economic vitality of development, the researchers used Leon County Property Appraisal data sets from 2006 and 2019 to assess property values. This data helped discover trends in property values before and after completion of CollegeTown.

In order to properly assess the level of equity that the CollegeTown development has brought about, the researchers turned to income data from the US Census. While there is no Census tract that perfectly lines up with the borders of the area of interest, but tract 5 encompasses the majority of CollegeTown. Researchers considered a number of income-related statistics in the analysis of equitability in CollegeTown. Primarily, household income was used to track growth in income, but married couple income and non-family household income levels were also analyzed.

Visuals

Economic:

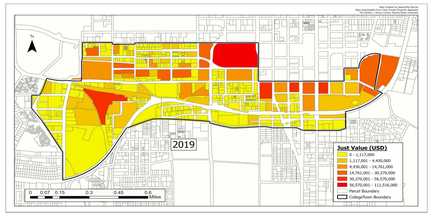


Figure 1

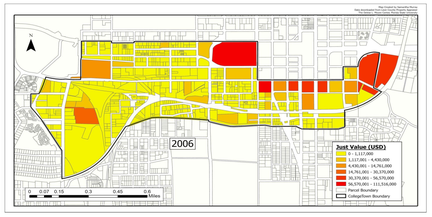
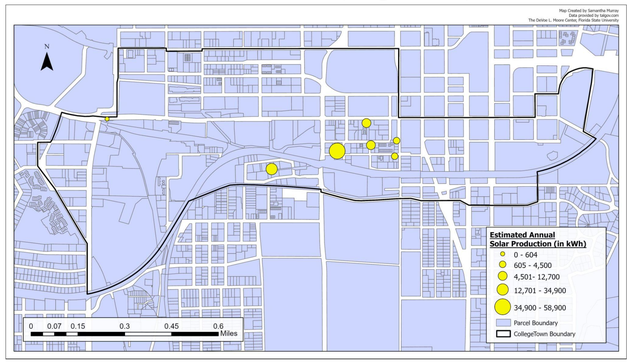


Figure 2

Environmental (Figure 3):



Equity

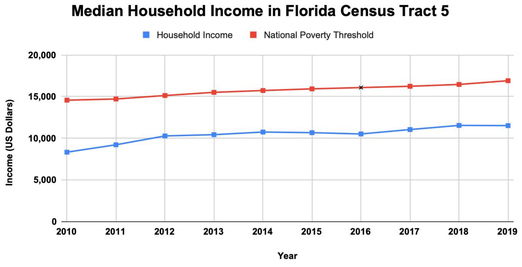


Figure 4

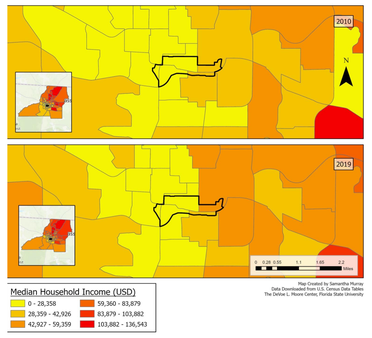


Figure 5

Preliminary Results

- According to the Tallahassee government solar-net metering data, the average kWh of energy produced annually by solar panels in the CollegeTown area is 17,313 kWh.
- Total property values have nearly doubled, growing from $489 million in 2006 to $861 million in 2019.
  - The average parcel property value also increased from 862 thousand in 2006 to 1.3 million in 2019.
- Only 7% of the households in the CollegeTown area experienced income levels greater than $35,000 per household with a median household income of $8,319 in 2010 (Figure 4).
  - By 2019, this figure had grown to 20.5%, with median household income growing to $11,511.

Study Limitations

One potential limitation of the data used for the equity portion of this research is that a significant portion of the residents of the CollegeTown area (Census tract 5) are students of either Florida State University, Florida A&M University, or Tallahassee Community College. The large presence of college-aged individuals residing within Census tract 5 may affect the income data used in this study, as college students typically work part-time jobs. Additionally, the research possesses no effective way of knowing what portion of these college enrolled residents declare CollegeTown as their primary place of residence. No limitations were found when examining the parcel property values in the CollegeTown area. The limitations of environmental sustainability research included not having complete data on the energy consumption and sources that residential and commercial buildings use to operate the facilities.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the perspectives of the three E's,researchers can conclude that CollegeTown is a sustainable development.

- The area has seen property values nearly double since completion. From an economic point of view, this justifies the quality of the structures and time it took to complete the development.
- Environmentally, implementing more solar panels within the CollegeTown area, provides a utility maximizing budget involving zero cost to implement city approved panels. Incorporating renewable energy in place of natural gas can make a big change for the Tallahassee area, and help CollegeTown serve as a model for other college urban areas around the nation.
- In terms of equity, residents of CollegeTown have experienced low levels of income mobility throughout the development as median income household income has only risen by roughly $3,000 since the start of the development.

Acknowledgements & References

Special Thanks: Dr. Crystal Taylor, Samantha Murray, and the DeVoe L. Moore Center.

References: "Florida Dept. of Revenue - Property Tax - Data Portal - Request Assessment Roll and GIS Data." Florida Department of Revenue, https://floridarevenue.com/property/Pages/DataPortal_RequestAssessmentRollGISData.aspx.

"Prior HHS Poverty Guidelines and Federal Register References." *ASPE*, 14 Jan. 2022, https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references.

"The City of Tallahassee." *City of Tallahassee Utilities*, https://www.talgov.com/you/you-products-home-solar-net-metering.aspx.