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**Visceral Approaches in Planning Practices:
A Study of Neighborhood Centers in Austin, TX**

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by

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Report

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Abstract

Visceral Approaches in Planning Practices: A Study of Neighborhood Centers in Austin, TX

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Bodies are a social construction with expected trajectories based on their physical, social, and economic positions, and planning has often been a tool to control bodies in public space without considering these diverse experiences. Visceral methodologies use embodied practices to collect data concerning feelings and emotions, which can give depth and clarity to socio-spatial issues (Sweet & Ortiz Escalante, 2015). As the 2012 Imagine Austin comprehensive plan is being implemented, this study tests a visceral approach to investigate the relationship between the physical social spaces, and how people using the spaces feel internally, i.e. sensations, moods, physical states of being. Individual experiences and feelings are collected and analyzed to understand the economic, social, and political landscapes of three Neighborhood Centers as their physical landscapes change. As planners utilizing visceral methodologies, this study's hyperlocal evaluation gives insight into how visceral methodologies can be used in the planning context and illuminates larger implications for the planning practice.

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Chapter 1: An Introduction to Space and Place – Austin, TX

Cities serve diverse communities, economic interests, and fragile environmental systems. These groups are often at odds with one another and it is the job of the planner to “negotiate fears and anxieties, mediate memories and hopes, and facilitate change and transformation” between differences (Sandercock, 2000, pg. 29). To better understand how to manage these differences, this study will test a visceral approach to analyze the relationship between physical social spaces, and how people using the spaces feel internally, i.e. sensations, moods, physical states of being. This opening chapter will introduce the location and context for the study, describing the background and framework for planning in Austin, Texas and the specific neighborhood centers that were engaged. In the following chapter, an in-depth overview of visceral approaches will be discussed, leading to a complete description and explanation of the modified mixed-method survey used for this study. The Findings and Discussion section of the report recounts the results for the case studies and finally the report will conclude with how visceral approaches can potentially be utilized by the planning practice based on this case study of Neighborhood Centers in Austin, TX.

Before briefly introducing visceral approaches, it should be understood that bodies are viewed as a social construct with expected trajectories based on their physical, social, and economic positions. Under these assumptions, bodies have been prescribed to experience physical public space in similar or the same ways (Sweet & Ortiz Escalante, 2015). Without critical analysis, planners have been shown to use social norms to design spaces and places traditionally from a singular perspective and experience of belonging, sense of place, and safety (Sandercock, 2000). But in actuality, individual internal sensations are far more complex and unique than can be assessed from a singular viewpoint within the duality ‘good’ or ‘bad’ places.

People have the power to communicate, influence, and contest these assumptions of how spaces should be experienced and what the feelings of the body should be. Through the continual relationship of the natural, cultural, and experiential experiences, people embody spaces producing places that have been mutually created by the user and the built environment (Low, 2016).

Visceral methodologies focus on embodied experiences as a type of data, concerning feelings and emotions, which can give depth and clarity to socio-spatial issues at play in those places (Sweet & Ortiz Escalante, 2015). This study intends to investigate the extent to which belonging, safety, and a sense of place is being developed and achieved in Austin, TX. It tests this against the Imagine Austin 2012 comprehensive plan, using Neighborhood Centers in different stages of development; developed, in progress, and underdeveloped, as the places from which to collect data. The comprehensive plan will be discussed in depth later in the report but Imagine Austin envisions a city of compact and connected “complete communities” that provide the all resources and amenities needed in a designated area and population size. Neighborhood Centers are the smallest scale of complete community.

Utilizing visceral methodologies can hypothetically give insight into how the public feels, perceives, and uses spaces of the Neighborhood Centers in their different stages of development. In theory, this methodology will gauge where the complete community principles are being achieved in the selected transit-oriented Neighborhood Centers and has the potential to encourage planners to consider how different users will embody these spaces. With data regarding feelings and experiences attached to place, planners can recognize the specific social and physical cohesion of a community, breaking away from the assumptions of how a space is and will be experienced. A nuanced understanding of place and the social and economic

structures that affect people utilizing the space can inform the planning process to develop more equitably and maintain community qualities for the future.

Austin – A Brief History

In 1837, the village of Waterloo was founded on the banks of the Colorado River, it was the first settlement in this area of Texas (Imagine Austin, 2012). Waterloo became the capital of the Republic of Texas in 1839 and was renamed as Austin in honor of the “Father of Texas,” Stephen F. Austin. The city was chosen as the capital due to its central location, consistent water supply, and beautiful landscapes. Once the state government established itself in the city, the University of Texas was founded in Austin in 1881. Soon after, the government and education sectors dominated the local economy (Imagine Austin, 2012).

The Southern Progressive era (1890-1920) created a new urban order in cities across Texas including Austin. Industrializing cities held power over agrarian rural communities as urbanized professionals promoted modernization and social equity (Tretter, 2012). To Southern progressives, social justice wasn’t the issue at hand, instead they were advocating for business progressivism that would expand public services to stimulate economic growth and promote public welfare (Tretter, 2012). Business leaders spearheaded progressive reforms endorsing modernization in the hopes to build out their cities as spaces for the “white commercial-civic elite” (Tretter, 2012, pg. 9). To achieve these goals, local governments turned to comprehensive planning, municipal improvements and services, and zoning to execute their vision for the future (Tretter, 2012).

In 1928, Austin created the city’s first comprehensive plan, “A Plan for Austin Texas,” which supported many of these Southern Progressive reform ideologies while also institutionalizing racial inequalities. Though racial zoning was deemed unconstitutional by the

Supreme Court in 1917, cities like Austin continued to use race-based planning and segregation policies by clustering public facilities for African-Americans, encouraging restrictive residential covenants in private neighborhoods, and utilizing discriminatory property appraisal and lending practices (Tretter, 2012). Austin's 1928 comprehensive plan essentially removed black residents from Freedom Towns that were spread throughout the city by creating the "negro district" east of I-35, where the only city provided facilities and amenities for the black population would be located. This solution was viewed as a win-win for the city as they could continue to legally implement racial segregation and they would not have to pay to duplicate public facilities for both whites and blacks throughout town. Though legally considered white, Mexicans or people of Mexican descent were viewed as culturally inferior and experienced much of the same bigotry and racism as blacks and were also targeted for exclusion as a part of this plan (Tretter, 2012). As both racial groups were forced to the East, the city also zoned large portions of the area for industrial use, in turn devaluing people of color's property and causing safety hazards for communities. Even with the implementation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, remnants of Austin's segregated past permeate today and influence the planning and zoning process of the City.

Throughout the 40s, 50s, and 60s, Austin's population grew by 35% but economic activity wasn't developing at the same pace (Imagine Austin, 2012). City leadership began marketing Austin as an educational center with the intention of drawing in the technology and innovation sector. In 1967, IBM built its typewriter manufacturing plant on the northern edge of the city and Austin established itself as a high-tech hub (Rockwell, 2017). By the 1990s over 400 tech manufacturers had located in the Central Texas region leading to issues of sprawl and negative environmental impacts for the city (Imagine Austin, 2012). These added stresses of rapid growth and development have pushed Austin to pursue more environmentally conscious and sustainable

planning as the city looks to the future, specifically advancing methods of transit-oriented development and multimodal opportunities.

As the city has entered the twenty-first century, Austin continues to be one of the fastest growing city in country. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Austin’s population grew by 12% between 2010 and 2013, where the national average was only 2.4%. To address this growth, the City of Austin released a master plan, Imagine Austin, in 2012 aimed at implementing a new vision for the city. The plan focuses on creating “complete communities” which embody their ideas of sustainability, social equity, and a thriving economic sector. To achieve these goals, the city is designing a form-based code called CodeNEXT. CodeNEXT will modify the city’s current land development code, which determines what, where, and how much development can be built.

Imagine Austin & CodeNEXT

Released in 2012, Imagine Austin took over two years to create and engaged with over 18,000 community members from around the city. With this community input and analysis on existing conditions within the city, the planning department synthesized a vision for Austin and its land use. Imagine Austin’s guiding vision is to create a “city of complete communities” (Imagine Austin, 2012, pg. 88). Every complete community “will be livable, safe, and affordable; promote physical activity, community engagement, and inclusion; ensure that amenities and services are easily accessible to all; and contribute to Austin’s unique community spirit” (Imagine Austin, 2012, pg. 88). Specifically, Imagine Austin has identified seven elements that make a community complete: *livable, mobile and interconnected, prosperous, educated, creative, natural and sustainable, and values and respects people*. To preserve

Austin's uniqueness, no two complete communities will be the same. Each community will vary based on size, services, and character.

Utilizing this vision, planners have designed a Growth Concept Map that identifies the sites for the physical manifestation of these ideals of complete communities. This Concept Map demonstrates how Austin will accommodate growth and implement the city's goals as it evolves over the next 30 years (Imagine Austin, 2012). The scale and size of the complete communities are defined as a part of the Concept Map. This study will specifically focus on Neighborhood Centers that are located on a current or proposed high capacity transit lines.

Neighborhood Centers are the smallest scale of development model within Imagine Austin. Mixed-use development is proposed to be situated around one or two intersections with dense and diverse housing options. The area will be walkable, bikable, and have opportunities to access transit. Commercial and retail opportunity in the Neighborhood Center will be geared towards serving the local residents including amenities like grocery stores, restaurants, doctors' offices, hair salons, and other local businesses. Neighborhood Centers will be able to accommodate 5,000 – 10,000 people and intend to provide 2,500 – 7,000 jobs for the community. Neighborhood Centers will promote connectivity while maintaining community character.

To bring the Growth Concept Map to life and to implement the vision of Imagine Austin, the land development code for the city must change. Austin's code has not been revised for over thirty years and the city believes that the current code does not have the ability to shape and manage growth or Imagine Austin's vision effectively.

The new code hopes to make direct impacts on mobility, community, environment, housing, and permitting. For example, the new code would have influence on the design of spaces to improve walkability and connectivity between places as a way to promote multimodal

transportation. Additionally, the new zoning should reflect the community character and sense which could potentially have a positive impact on communities. In regard to the environment, the code will have tools to reduce flooding and to establish more green space within the city. In relation to housing, the new zoning advocates for added diversity of typologies in the hopes that more people will have access to housing that suits their needs and budget. And finally, the city is streamlining the permitting process by rewriting the code to be easier to understand and legible to more people.

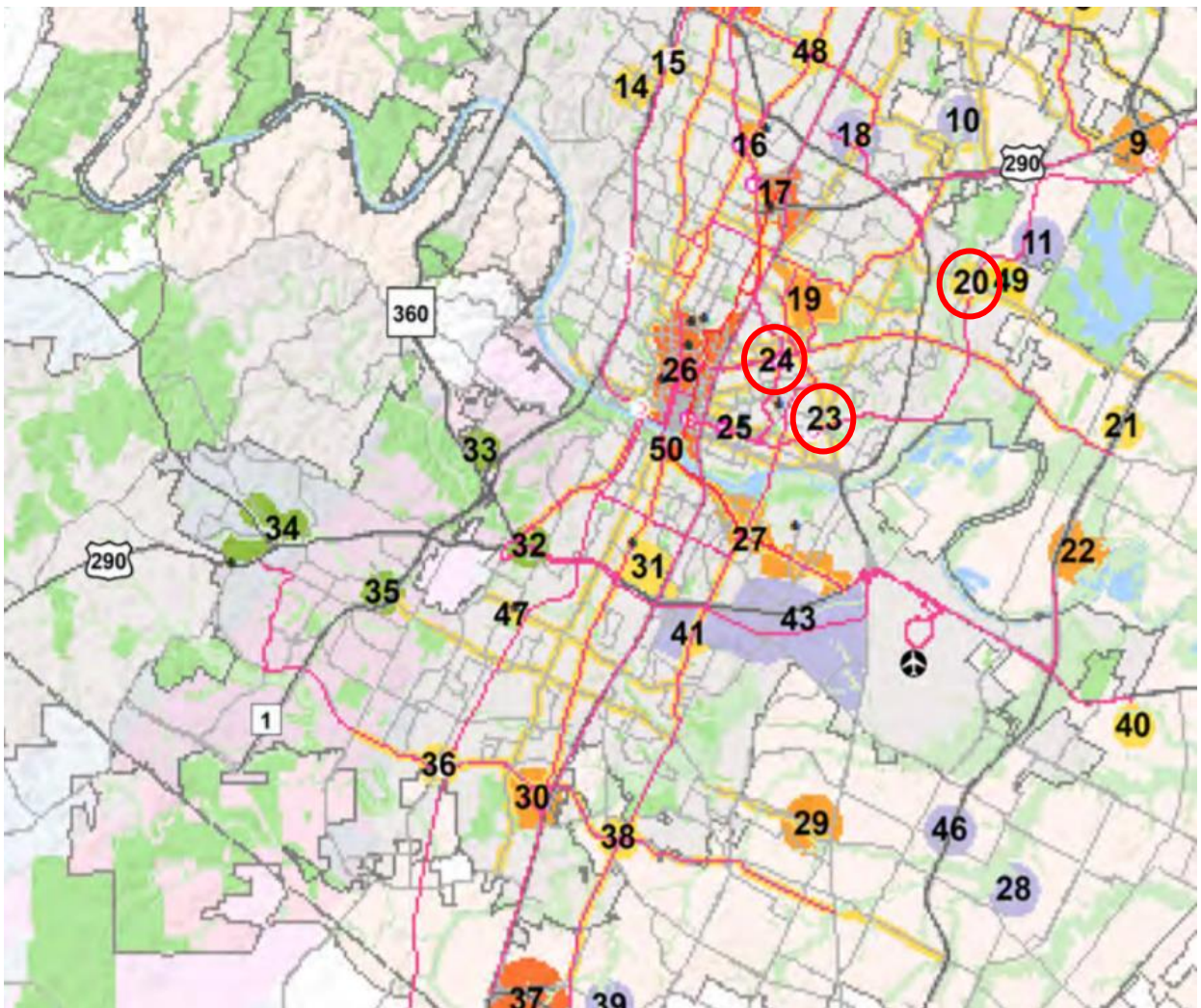


Figure 1 - Growth Concept Map from Imagine Austin. See Neighborhood Centers 20 – Colony Park, 23 – Springdale, 24 – MLK.

For Neighborhood Centers at their most dense intersections, they will be zoned as a type of mixed use or main street development. In addition to their commercial and retail uses, these developments are likely to be required to build density of 17 – 45 residential units per acre. Masterplans and community development strategies will establish the exact zoning and uses for Neighborhood Centers as the projects are planned.

For almost two years, the city has been working through drafts and edits of CodeNEXT based on community feedback as they are attempting to have a socially aware process that spreads development equally across the city. It would be damaging for the city and its leadership, if the new land development code disproportionately impacts people of color and lower income residents since the city has such a prominent history with openly racist planning and zoning.

City council will vote to approve the code in May 2018. Though CodeNEXT is still in the development phase, some of Imagine Austin’s visions for future land use and development have already been executed or are in process. This study will investigate three areas that Imagine Austin has identified as Neighborhood Centers. Each center is in a different stage of the development process, but all centers have, or are proposed to have, access to high capacity transit. Transit hubs and plazas will be at the heart of these Neighborhood Centers which in turn makes them easier to compare across their development stages. Transit stops anchored the research as places that are focal points for these communities. Based on the growth concept map within Imagine Austin, Neighborhood Centers 20, 23, and 24 have been chosen for this study.

Case Studies:

Neighborhood Center #20 – Colony Park Station

Colony Park Station, is near the intersection of Loyola Lane and Johnny Morris Road, seven miles northeast of downtown Austin. The area was annexed by the City of Austin in 1973

and many of the developments here date back to this time period (Colony Park, 2014). Currently, Colony Park does not have a rail station, but four bus routes service the area. Loyola Lane is a high-speed arterial that connects to Highway 183 to the west and toll road 130 to the east. The area is made up primarily of single family homes. Amenities in the area include a small gas station with a convenience store, Barbara Jordan Elementary School, and Colony Park. Most of the area is zoned for single family, neighborhood commercial which includes the school, limited industrial use, and mobile homes. The proposed zoning is mostly consistent with the current zoning.

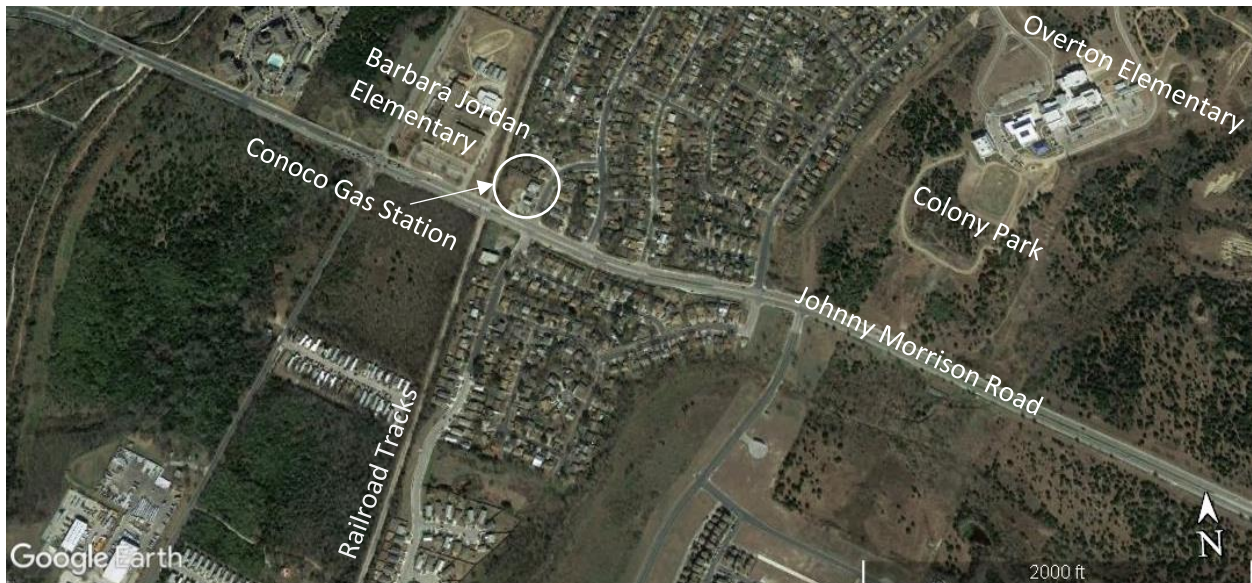


Figure 2 - Colony Park Station Map

Directly adjacent to the Colony Park Station Neighborhood Center is the Colony Park Neighborhood Center, which is 258 acres of planned development (Colony Park, 2014). The city purchased the land in 2001 dedicating 50 acres to parkland and 208 acres to the Austin Housing Finance Corporation. In February of 2012, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the City of Austin with \$3 million to redevelop the site as a part of the Sustainable Communities

Challenge grant (Colony Park, 2014). Overton Elementary School was built on the site in 2011 and Turner-Roberts Recreation Center opened in 2013. Currently the rest of the area is undeveloped and the city is seeking a master developer to build out the masterplan of Colony Park Neighborhood Center. As this project moves forward, it could have major impacts on Colony Park Station and the two together have the potential to become a dense, mixed-use destination similar to Austin's Mueller development.

Colony Park Station is within the larger census tract 22.02 of Travis County, Texas. The population of tract is 9,104 people (ACS, 2016). The racial demographics of the community are *66% of the residents are Latino, 27% are black, 5% are white, and 2% are two or more races*(ACS, 2016). Of the total population, 28% of residents are foreign born, indicating there may be a strong Latino immigrant community here. Additionally, 40% of residents are under 18, 28% are 18-34, 29% are 34 – 64, 4% are 65+ (ACS, 2016).

Based on this data, it appears that the area is largely made up of families with children. The two elementary schools within the census tract confirm this idea as well as Barbara Jordan Elementary has over 700 students enrolled and Overton Elementary has over 600 students enrolled. In looking at income levels in the neighborhood, 33% of families are living below the poverty line and 85% of the households are making less than \$75,000 a year. In 2015, the median family income for Austin was \$76,800 for a four-person family. Thinking about the connectivity and mobility of the community, 54% of the population spends 20 – 40 mins travel time to work and 76% of the population drove alone (ACS, 2016).

Though there is no masterplan for the Colony Park Station Neighborhood Center, change will subsequently occur due to the adjacent development and continued growth at the outskirts of Austin. This Neighborhood Center was chosen to be a part of this investigation because Colony

Park Station is proposed to have a high capacity rail station in the future, but the area has yet to be affected by Imagine Austin’s Neighborhood Center proposed development.

Neighborhood Center #23 – Springdale Station



Figure 3 - Map of Springdale Station Neighborhood Center

Springdale Station is near the intersection of Springdale Road and Airport Boulevard, approximately three miles east of downtown Austin. Springdale Station is proposed to have a rail station, but the project has yet to be approved or constructed. Currently the area is serviced by three bus routes. Airport Boulevard runs north – south and connects to Highway 183 to the south. The area currently has a number of different land uses. Govalle Elementary and Govalle Neighborhood Park are zoned public. A large portion of the site is commercial mixed use which includes art galleries, restaurants, convenience stores, tire shops, and other commercial activity in this area. In the middle of the site is a large Planned Unit Development (PUD) which currently houses a climbing gym, a brewery, and other businesses. The area is surrounded by single family zoning and portions of this land have not been redeveloped. The proposed zoning changes are

minimal in this area. This Neighborhood Center will be used in the project as an example of an area that is undergoing redevelopment in accordance with Imagine Austin as it was primarily industrial ten years ago.

Springdale Station was originally settled in 1848 by Swedish immigrants, who took advantage of the areas rich fertile soil (thinkEAST, 2016). Govalle inherited its name from early Swedish farmer as he called his ranch the “Ga Valla” which means good grazing land (thinkEAST, 2016). Due to the 1928 Plan, people of color were pushed to the East and began settling the neighborhood. By the 1940s, 11% of Austin’s population was Latino and the majority of that population was living in East Austin. By the 1950s, Govalle neighborhood had become a predominately Latino neighborhood (thinkEAST, 2016).

Unfortunately, the 1928 Plan had also designated East Austin as a place for unwanted industrial activity. With easy access to two rail lines and industrial zoning over 90% of Austin’s industrial use was located in East Austin. One of the major uses was a bulk petroleum storage site known as ‘Tank Farm’ which makes up a 100 acres of the Springdale Station area. Exxon, Mobil, Citgo, Chevron, Texaco, and Coastal all had facilities at Tank Farm (thinkEAST, 2016). This facility sat adjacent to residential and agricultural land uses from the 1940s through the early 1990s. Residents were constantly exposed to environmental hazards but after several spills occurred in the 1980s the ground soil and water supply were contaminated. In 1991, People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (PODER) was formed as a community activist group to stop the expansion of Tank Farm. Ultimately the facilities closed in 1993 and the site began remediation. It is positioned for development as a part of the Springdale Station Neighborhood Center as well as a mixed use planned unit development called thinkEAST. thinkEAST has been working with community leaders and PODER to develop a masterplan that

incorporates arts and culture, economic opportunities, and affordable housing east of Govalle Park (thinkEAST, 2016).

Today Springdale Station Neighborhood Center is at the intersection of two census tracts. To assess the demographics of the area, this project will look at both census tract 8.01 and 21.11 of Travis County, Texas. The population of combined tracts is 7,058 people (ACS, 2016). The combined racial demographics of the community are 63% of the residents are Latino, 12% are black, 21% are white, 1% are Asian, and 2% are two or more races. Of the total population, 21% of residents are foreign born (ACS, 2016). Additionally, 23% of residents are under 18, 28% are 18-34, 36% are 34 – 64, 13% are 65+ (ACS, 2016).

The data may indicate that the neighborhoods have more aging and longtime residents than young families. This is consistent with enrollment at Govalle Elementary School, which has a lower number of students enrolled, 470. Of these students enrolled, over 80% are Latino. In looking at income levels in the neighborhood, 21% of families are living below the poverty line and 76% of the households are making less than \$75,000 a year. Compared with Colony Park, this community has lower rates of poverty and more households making above the median family income. This Neighborhood Center seems to have more connectivity and mobility in relations to job centers as only 38% of the population spends 20 – 40 mins travel time to work but there still seems like a lack of multimodal transportation options as again 76% of the population drove alone.

Neighborhood Center #24 – MLK Station



Figure 4 - Map of MLK Station Neighborhood Center

Neighborhood Center 24, MLK Station, is near the intersection of Alexander Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, approximately 2 ½ miles northeast of downtown Austin.

MLK Station is an active transit stop on Austin’s light rail and it takes about 10 minutes to get from the station to the downtown stop. Two bus routes also service the area. The MLK Station is zoned as a transit-oriented development (TOD) overlay which promotes housing density, human scale design, and mixed commercial uses including retail and office space. The proposed zoning for this area does not change within CodeNext.

This Neighborhood Center will be used as an example of redevelopment in accordance with a growth plan. The plan for MLK Station predates Imagine Austin but promotes the same values for growth. In May of 2005, the Transit Oriented Development Ordinance was approved by city council and designated six TOD districts as a part of the light rail development (MLK TOD Plan, 2007). TOD development for these transit stations supports mixed-use, density,

pedestrian friendly design, and affordability. Development began on the MLK Station in 2007 and the fully redevelopment of the area will be completed in 2025 (MLK TOD Plan, 2007).

To assess the demographics of the MLK Station Neighborhood, this project will look at specifically at census tract 8.03 of Travis County, Texas. The population of the tract is 2,327 people (ACS, 2016). The racial demographics of tract is 26% of the residents are Latino, 13% are black, 54% are white, 3% are Asian, and 4% are two or more races (ACS, 2016). Of the total population, 6% of residents are foreign born. Additionally, 9% of residents are under 18, 46% are 18-34, 40% are 34 – 64, 6% are 65+ (ACS, 2016).

This data may indicate that the neighborhood has less families and more young professionals in the area. Campbell Elementary School has the lowest enrollment of the elementary schools included in the study areas with only 194 students, the majority of who are African American (57%) and Latino (36%). This neighborhood has much lower rates of poverty and more households making closer to the median family income than the other two neighborhoods with only 8% of families are living below the poverty line and 61% of the households are making less than \$75,000 a year. MLK Station Neighborhood Center seems to have more connectivity and mobility in relations to job centers as only 20% of the population spending 20 – 40 mins travel time to work and over 57% spending less than 20 minutes traveling to work (ACS, 2016). Even with the lightrail transit stop 64% of the population drove alone to work and while 12% rely on public transportation.

Chapter 2: Methods – Visceral Approaches in Planning Practice

For the past century, planners have approached their work from a perspective of rationality, of order, of logic (Donald, 1999). Cities and their populations are seen as places and people to be mapped and managed. Much of the theory that has come out of the planning practice not only speaks to the ways to produce space but the ways to shape communities and to purify citizens that inhabit them. From the City Beautiful movement with Olmstead's hope that the awe and grandeur of beautiful space would inspire residents to be stand up citizens to Robert Moses' Urban Renewal Plans in which he tore down whole parts of New York City, full of vibrant communities, to promote modernity. The history of management and manipulation from planners is clear.

Since its beginning as a field, planning has approached the work as a way to promote safe, healthy living conditions and mediating the differences within our communities so that everyone has a better life, but some have argued that planning in fact has been managing the fears within the city (Sennett, 1979). As Leonie Sandercock implies, planning since its inception in the 20th century has been the work of those in power and control of the city managing the “fear of disorder, fear of disease (and those subjects/citizens thought to cause its spread), fear of women, fear of the working classes, of immigrants, of gays (‘polluting the moral order’), of gypsies” (2000, pg. 22). And as planning has been historically strategized from a singular perspective and experience of belonging, sense of community, and safety to design and plan communities, it has been used as a tool to regulate female, non-white, and queer bodies in public spaces. Examples of this type of planning regulation are exclusion from certain areas of the city though tools like segregation zoning and restrictive covenants. Or other strategies of ‘moral reform’ to help produce citizens that behavior and perform in a certain manner that fits the social

norms. For example, Jane Adams' settlement houses at the turn of the century trying to teach immigrants the new American ways of life (Sandercock, 2000).

Under these planning regulations, bodies are social constructs with expected trajectories and it is assumed people will or should experience the built environment in similar or the same ways. In actuality, the internal sensations of people are far more complex and individualized than can be assessed from a singular viewpoint within the duality 'good' or 'bad' places. In this new contemporary context of the 21st century, we as planners need to continue the evolution of our outlook and processes of planning and design of spaces. Instead of managing the differences of a diverse, multicultural city into a rational, orderly, homogenous city, planners are experimenting with methodologies from a variety of fields and practices to create a wider scope for the potential of our work and its impacts on human and built environments. The focus of this research has been to test new approaches and methodologies coming out the human geography, more specifically visceral geographies and applying them to the practice of planning.

Visceral Approaches in Human Geography

The field of human geography has long studied the body, physically and materiality, with body-centered investigations at the heart of much of the field's research. When thinking of the visceral, raw feelings, animalistic tendencies, natural instincts are all brought to mind and in the academic context of human geography, the visceral aspect of the body has often been approached in this manner as intrinsic and uncomplicated. Recent work in the field, though, has alluded to visceral reactions being less pre-social and natural than previously thought, and these visceral reactions actually are nurtured by society and influenced by social norms (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). The visceral methodologies that will be focused on in this paper were developed, adapted, and expanded upon out this research of the collecting data concerning feelings and

emotions while also being highly aware of the social, economic, and political implications of these feelings. In this subfield, visceral geography has worked with methods like body-map storytelling and shared sensory experiences to understand the body as an analytical space and scale that can give insight into how and why social patterns and economic structures are occurring (Ortiz-Escalante, Sweet, 2015).

The physical body influences and is influenced by the material world and built environment on a daily basis (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). The body as a concept has often been studied in its relation to other types of bodies and more generally even the interactions of the body with the physical, material world. The ways and reasoning for how these relationships work, or why they are happening at all, vary across a wide spectrum but a critical argument within visceral geography as Hayes-Conroy explain is that there are social and political implications to these relationships. This work suggests that the social and political realities of our times play out in our bodies everyday, and everywhere we go.

Visceral approaches understand our emotional responses and internal sensations in relationship to the physical environments or socially constructed situations we inhabit. More specifically this is important because it may indicate that understanding feelings and emotions within ourselves may be applied as an analytical tool of physical and social systems at large (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). For example, if you are a black woman living in the United States, you may have different emotional experiences and feelings in certain places or in different social settings than white women living in the United States and this is likely due to the historical and current racism and oppression of women of color. In this way, the social and political dynamics of the country are playing out in your internal experiences and feelings. It is pertinent to remember that places look and feel differently depending on who you are and that the built

environment elicits diverse responses from those that occupy it (Dengen, Rose, 2012). Visceral approaches hope to use individual experiences and feeling to not only better understand the larger issues and systems at play but to take a more active position in influencing and creating policies that effect these individuals' daily lives.

By gathering stories about diverse feelings and interactions with the physical environment and social systems, we can potentially recognize ways to effectively represent more people through changed policies (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). With diverse feelings and experiences, there will be no singular solution to issues of physical or social environment. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities to mobilize a community in new ways and employ the body as an agent for change, taking social and political action (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). Additionally, planners have been using forms of storytelling to perform policy research and analysis as it has shown to be a powerful tool to raise awareness and for advocacy (Sandercock, 2003). Stories not only share experiences, perspectives, and feelings of the storyteller but they ground us deeper in understanding the human condition. Within our stories and memories, the sensory aspects of a setting can be vibrant and telling, even shedding light onto the larger social, political, and economic systems developing the built environment (Sandercock, 2003). In an embodied practice like those utilized by visceral approaches, facilitators are able to identify the commonalities in individual and community stories to produce the qualitative data needed to prioritize demands, mobilize community members, influence policy, and even empower participants in these processes (Ortiz-Escalante, Sweet, 2015).

Visceral approaches have adapted practices from other fields that are body-centered, process-oriented, and collaborative, often breaking down the barriers between researcher and participant (Ortiz-Escalante, Sweet, 2015). Utilizing methods like shared sensory experiences,

body-map storytelling, and exploratory walking, the research performed can be a therapeutic process for participants, even inspiring empowerment and personal transformation (Ortiz-Escalante, Sweet, 2015). One example of this comes from Toronto, where researchers used body-map storytelling when working with migrant populations to generate data about their health, well-being, and migrant experience (Gastaldo, et. al, 2012). Throughout the process, researchers provided a nurturing, trusted space for participants share the heavy emotions of their stories and experiences as migrants. Additionally, the body-map/art produced was not only a visual representation of themselves but spoke to the social, political, and economic influences that had shaped the participants in their experiences (Gastaldo, et. al, 2012). With the data collected, researchers hoped to influence public health policy around the issues and problems that arose from their findings.

Visceral approaches recognize the body as a scale and tool to analyze socio-spatial circumstances of the everyday. Our emotions, sensory experiences, and stories are powerful and should be utilized as quantitative data to influence the future of our places and policies. As the planning field continues to evolve, it can look to other disciplines for innovative methods for incorporating diverse voices. The market and urban growth machine are still unending, constantly pushing development and those bearing the burden of change are often the most vulnerable populations. Managing and mapping people and ideals in cities is not a comprehensive approach for planners nowadays and it is our charge to understand how our cities can promote equitable growth. By further testing and trying alternative methods like visceral approaches, there may be more tools to transform cities, mobilize communities, and empower individuals.

The Hedonic Map of Austin

In addition to the academic literature on visceral approaches, the work of local Austin artist, Jennifer Chenoweth, was very influential on the protocols that were adapted for the mixed methods survey utilized in this study. Shortly after *Imagine Austin* was released in 2012, Chenoweth embarked on an emotional mapping project throughout the city of Austin. The collaborative community art project she created was called the Hedonic Map of Austin, later the XYZ Atlas. Chenoweth came to Austin in the 90s from Oklahoma and was fascinated by her immediate connection to the place as a whole but also her emotional attachment to very specific destinations throughout the city. Her community mapping project grew out of this love of Austin and her emotional connection to it.

The Hedonic Map of Austin tries to visually capture residents' relationship with the physical city and their attachment to place (XYZ Atlas, 2016). The artist also insists that this is not a one-sided relationship but that the city feels too. The city knows our highs and our lows. It is a mutual, shared relationship with the built environment but also a collective experience of the city as many of us share similar emotional responses to these places that become quantifiable within the map (XYZ Atlas, 2016).

Over 500 community members participated in the creation of the initial map, answering twenty questions; ten regarding positive emotions and ten for negative emotions (XYZ Atlas, 2016). These emotions and stories correlated to pinpointed locations of where participants felt their greatest joy and their worst despair. The responses were compiled into one beautiful emotional map of the city with high points representing larger numbers of people identifying a location as having positive experiences and low points representing the inverse.

Psychologist Robert Plutchik's Psychoevolutionary Theory of Emotion informed the Hedonic Map's survey questions. In Plutchik's theory of emotion he describes a 'Wheel of

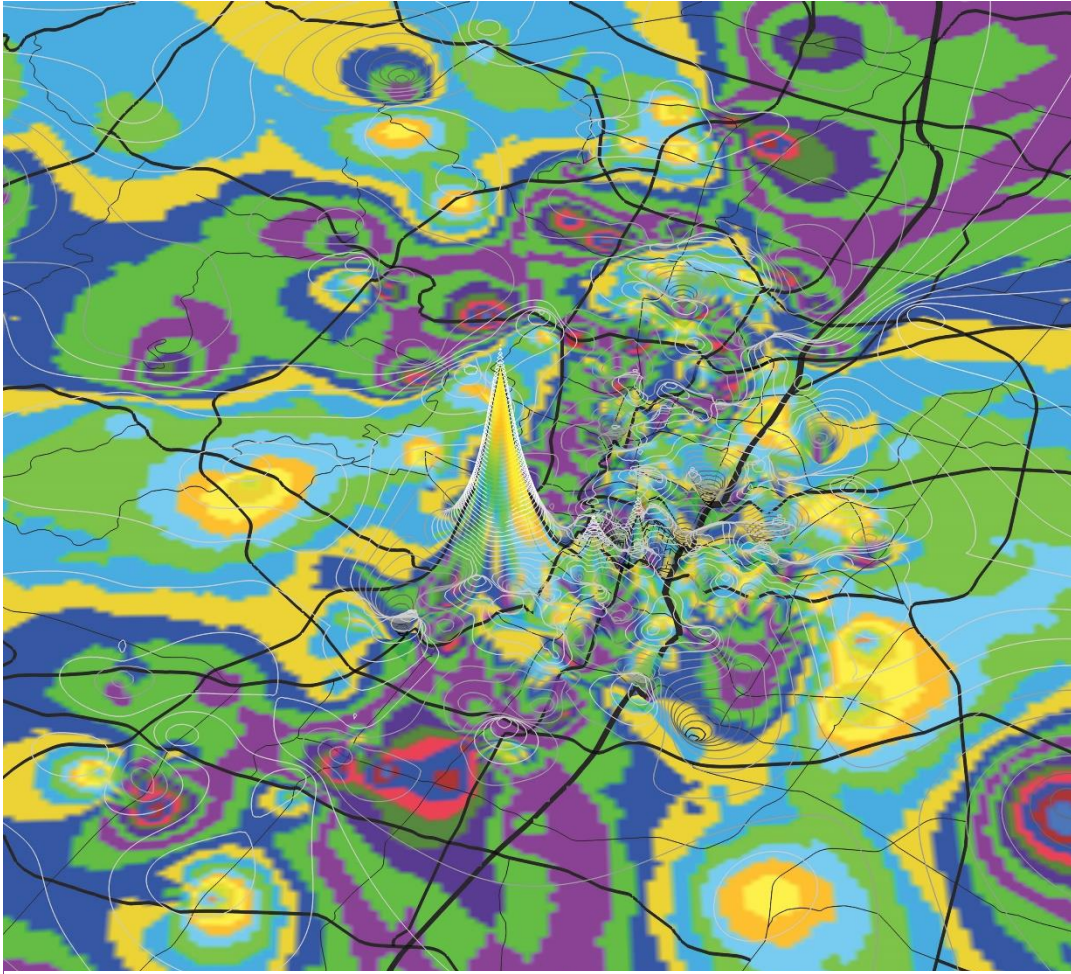


Figure 5 - Hedonic Map of Austin

Emotions' which classified feelings into 8 categories – joy, anger, trust, fear, excitement, sadness, surprise, and disgust. These primary emotions can combine and are felt at different intensities (Plutchik, 1980). Plutchik describes emotions not as stagnant feeling states but actually a set of complex reactions initiated by a catalyst that elicits feelings, behavioral changes, and impulses leading to actions (Plutchik, 2001). For example, when you see a close friend you to feel both joy and trust resulting in the behavioral response of giving a hug and the emotional effect of love. Additionally, Plutchik's theory suggests emotions are a strategy for survival in evolutionary terms (Plutchik, 1980). Implying that feelings and emotional responses which have

shown to benefit humans or enhance our survival are prioritized so that these feelings and responses are automatic when encountering certain stimuli as they have historically produced successful results.

Though Plutchik's wheel initially did not have assigned colors to each emotion, it lends itself easily to artistic interpretation as it resembles and functions similarly to a color wheel. With complimentary and opposing emotions combining to create new emotional responses.

Chenoweth used the wheel of emotion not only as a guiding light in her theory of emotional connection and attachment to place but also as an inspiration for the creative, colorful look of her work. Chenoweth's work may be interpreted solely as an artistic endeavor about the city of Austin but actually her series has great power in understanding the relationships and attachment residents have to the physical and social landscapes of the city.

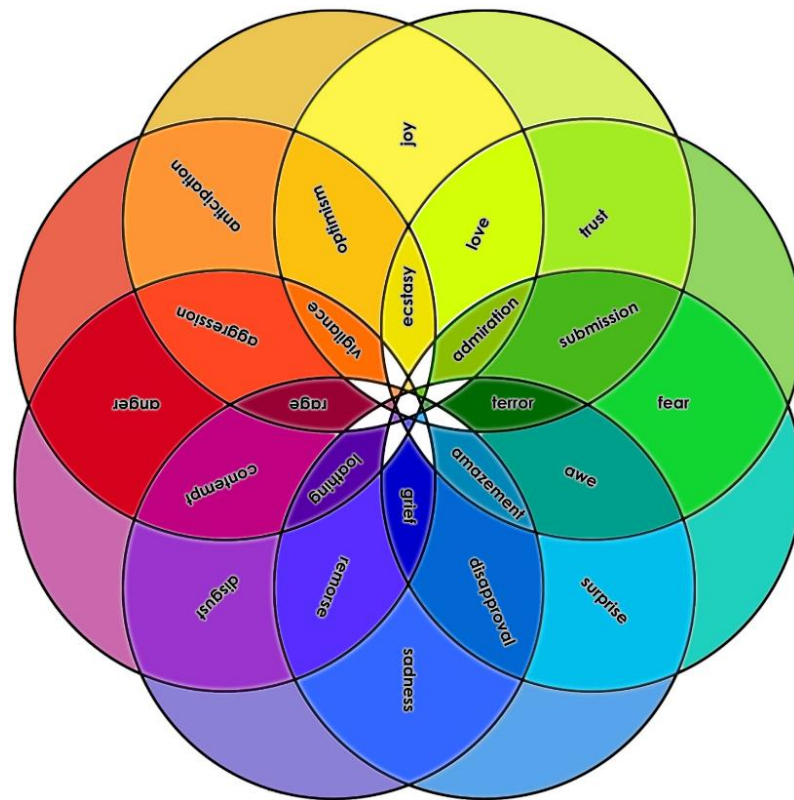


Figure 6 - Jennifer Chenoweth's Interpretation of the Plutchik Wheel of Emotions

A Visceral Approach to Neighborhood Centers in Austin

As discussed in the introduction, Austin is rapidly developing as people have been consistently flowing into the city for the last thirty years and moving in mass over the last ten. With this growth and change, city planners have been hard at work addressing new issues for the city like housing, as well as organizing for the future. It is with these dynamics of growth and change in mind that this research has proposed a visceral approach to provide hyperlocal evaluations of space, specifically in regards to safety, change, community, and belonging. Visceral methodologies and other sensing literature informed the creation of a mixed-method survey that was utilized in three different locations sited as Neighborhood Centers in Austin as a part of the 2012 Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

Research using this tool was performed in February of 2018. Those surveyed included pedestrians and transit riders at or near transit stops within each location between the hours of 7:30am – 10am and 3:30pm – 6pm, Monday through Friday. These hours and locations were chosen as this study hoped to survey community members that currently use transit, are invested in walkability, or frequent public spaces in the selected Neighborhood Centers. Since these locations have or are planned to have high capacity transit stops, it is important to be asking about feelings, perceptions, and uses of these spaces to the people occupying the proposed or actualized Neighborhood Centers. Their insights are particularly important as their feelings, memories, and experiences can identify hyperlocal socio-spatial issues. In relation to the goals of Imagine Austin, these insights may also reveal the current reality of a sense of place, feelings of belonging, and safety in these Neighborhood Centers. Data collected from this mixed method survey could potentially be used to inform our existing and future planning processes. The following section outlines how the method was performed and the reasoning behind each part of the mixed-method survey.

Sensing and Memory

The research engaged participants in practices of memory and sensing. Individuals surveyed were prefaced that this study was interested specifically in the participant's personal feelings not the feelings of the community at large. Additionally, the researcher tried to center the survey in place by encouraging participants to think explicitly about the area and neighborhood surrounding the transit stop when answering the questions of the survey. For this survey to be truly meaningful, participants need to be reflecting on this exact place instead of thinking in broader terms of the city. The scope of space is an important factor in this survey as the intent is to better understand the political and social issues being embodied and felt in these specific places. It is the hope of this study that the issues identified in the lived experiences and personal reflections of participants be considered in future planning and design work.

With this introduction to the study, the survey began by asking questions describing the physical elements and the social aspects of the neighborhood. Participants were encouraged to be specific about what they see, smell, and hear in this place. Furthermore, they were asked about the social aspects of the area concerning who lives in this place and who uses these spaces in this neighborhood. These questions were asked at the beginning of the process to help participants embody themselves, thinking through their own lens and physical experiences. The things we see, smell, hear in a place make it familiar, and habitual encounters through the senses allows people to attach memories, experiences, and meaning to a place (Tuan, 1977). Moreover, these memories and reflections on everyday life can give new meaning to the way the built environment is being felt and experienced (Dengen, Rose, 2012).

Survey questions continue digging a little deeper into memories in the Neighborhood Centers. Asking participants to share memories that defined the neighborhood or helped them understand what it is like in these places. Remembering is poignant. Our bodies naturally bring

memories back to life, recreating the emotional landscape within ourselves and the spatial landscape that surrounded us.

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions as a Tool

One particularly interesting part of this method was the utilization of Plutchik's wheel of emotions. Though similar to the use in Chenoweth's work, the wheel of emotion was adapted differently to be a part of this survey. Instead of creating specific questions around Plutchik's primary emotions, participants were asked to use the wheel to identify how they most often feel at the transit stop or around the neighborhood. Participants were further asked to explain the reasoning behind their feelings and were encouraged to give an example or tell a story that exemplifies why they feel this way in this space. Once compiled, these feelings and stories can potentially speak to the issues and priorities in each community.

After participants were asked to define their feeling in this place, they were then invited to spin the wheel of emotion. Whatever emotion the arrow lands on, the participants are asked to share a memory when they felt that emotion in this place. The spinning of the wheel of emotion gives participants an opportunity to engage with the complexity of place. For example, a participant may most often feel trust in the Neighborhood Center but if they spin the wheel and land on disgust it is likely they will also have a story to tell regarding this feeling as well. Place and feelings are never absolute and visceral geography is skeptical of assumed dualisms and binaries (Hayes-Conroy, 2010). Visceral approaches embrace the 'fuzziness' of everyday life and looks beyond the absolute to better understand and negotiate the realities of daily interactions (Hayes-Conroy, 2010).

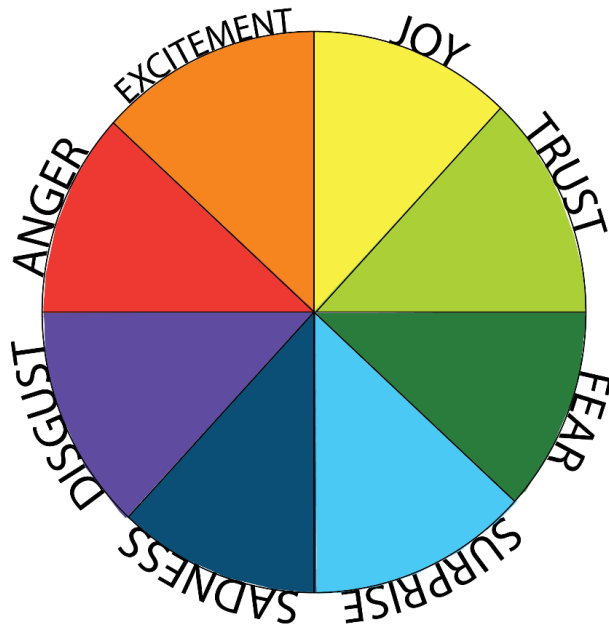


Figure 7 - Researcher's Wheel of Emotions for the Field

Furthermore, Plutchik's wheel of emotions is particularly relevant to this work with visceral geography. As mentioned earlier, Plutchik theorizes that emotions are a survival strategy and play a key role in helping people adapt to situations, environments, and issues. With a visceral approach, emotions give insight into how and why social patterns and economic structures are occurring. The emotions selected by participants and the stories they tell as a part of this section of the survey were analyzed to inform how the social, political, and physical environments of these places are affecting the emotional states of its residents. In regard to Plutchik's theory, these feelings shed light onto the ways people are adapting, changing their behavior, and their emotional responses as a way to survive in the social, political, and physical environments presented to them. This is particularly important as it may reveal why certain bodies feel differently in certain spaces.

Belonging, Community, & Sense of Place

After concluding the exercise with Plutchik's wheel of emotion, the survey continued by exploring a sense of belonging. Imagine Austin identifies inclusion and respect of all people as values that Neighborhood Centers should be striving to achieve. To examine and analyze these ideals, this section was informed by literature and research on a sense of belonging within these communities. The major themes used to understand belonging were taken from the work of sociologists, Michael Young and Peter Willmott. After performing an extensive ethnographic study in 1957, the researchers produced a book, *Family and Kinship in East London*, as well as a social research organization, the Institute for Community Studies. From this work came three qualifiers for having a strong sense of belonging: 1) length of residency, 2) a place with a character of its own, and 3) people who share a common history. Young and Willmott observed that people had to live in a place long enough to really settle, not changing around every few years. Related to this point is a shared common history, when people share experiences or tales are past down people feel a sense of connection and belonging to the people and the place. Finally, Young and Willmott noted that a place needs to have a character of its own to be distinguishable from other places so that there is something different about the place that people can identify with. With these criteria in mind, questions were formulated to extract these themes.

Questions were posed to participants about their relationships and experiences with their neighbors, if they felt like they shared values or traditions, etc. Length of residency was explicitly asked along with the area or housing type participants inhabited. The survey also blatantly asked whether the participant thought there was anything different or special about the neighborhood that distinguishes it from other areas. This point speaks strongly to a sense of place as well as belonging.

In addition to the inquiry of belonging, the survey intended to gather more information on the sense of community. To inform these questions in the survey, the research utilized a classic definition of sense of community from David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis work, *Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory*. This work outlines all the elements considered to be a part of a sense of community:

- shared emotional connection (based on interaction as well as shared events, and tied into the psychological aspects of sense of community as opposed to other affective notions)
- neighborhood or place attachment, predicated on social bonding, physical rootedness, the use of physical facilities and attraction to neighborhood
- membership, involving boundaries, emotional safety, a 'right' to belong, personal investment and a common symbol system
- influence, which has to do with group conformity
- reinforcement, whereby mutual needs are met, but also involving the degree to which residents regard each other in a positive way (without, necessarily, social interaction)
- sense of place, which has more to do with the environmental cognition of residents than with neighborhood social life.

There is substantial overlap in the definitions of belonging, community, and place. These elements in tandem helped define what and how questions should be asked regarding belonging, community, and place. In addition to the questions about neighbor relationships, participants were also asked how they define a complete community, if they consider their neighborhood a complete community, how they would change their neighborhood and their hopes for its future. Change was also discussed and if they had feelings about any changes.

Safety

Visceral approaches and this research are continually trying to connect feelings within ourselves to the socio-spatial landscape we inhabit. Felt and perceived safety may be a major indicator in interpreting the social and political issues occurring in a place. Violence and the perceived threat of violence can illuminate the social norms, power dynamics, and cultural reality of a place and time (Ortiz-Escalante, Sweet, 2015). Inquiring about safety, in this case specifically walking alone in the daytime and at night, is likely to evoke a visceral response that could shed light on the social, cultural, and political dynamics of a neighborhood. Furthermore, this survey asks participants to identify the physical elements that assist in making them feel safe or unsafe. The physical elements and layout of public spaces can contribute to violence or the perceived threat of violence (Ortiz-Escalante, Sweet, 2015). Those who feel safe at the transit stops, in public spaces, or generally in Neighborhood Center will have more access to these spaces as people are likely to use spaces when they feel comfortable and safe in a place. Any person who feels threatened has less access to public and community space which ultimately limits them from opportunities and amenities. This is a critical point to investigate.

In conclusion, the mixed-method visceral approach discussed here was adapted from other literature and work in the field. The fluidity and creative space allowed within visceral approaches makes it open to a wide variety of methods. The following chapter will present the findings of this study and analyze the successfulness of this approach specifically.

Chapter 3: Findings & Discussion – Results of the Mixed-Methods Survey

MLK Station : A Developed Neighborhood Center

Field Notes

Standing at the MLK Station, towards the west large apartment complexes tower overhead while the greenery of a community garden flourishes to the east of the tracks. The area is very clean and well maintained. It almost smells like fresh paint it feels so new. Sidewalks are wide here with young trees growing in the planter boxes. Manicured native plants line the open spaces of trimmed grass. Storefronts on the ground floor of the main buildings are covered in drywall dust as they are still being built out. A bright light on the corner of MLK and Alexander Avenue illuminates the new coffee shop. All this newness seems to be trying to attract attention of potential tenants, customers, or even workers.

The MLK Station sits on Alexander Avenue. It's a short street that ends in a large roundabout at the entrance of the non-profit village. The small business complex was a city initiative that houses organizations like Creative Action, PeopleFund, and the Sustainable Food Center. Beyond these organizations are colorful condos with small green walkways and two car garages. The density of this area gives way to detached single-family residences, some of which has been recently renovated and expanded upon.

Though the apartments must house thousands of people, there are never more than a handful out walking the streets. There's a lone dog walker or jogger, maybe there will be two out to pass each other with a nod. In the morning, five or ten minutes before the train is scheduled to arrive, people start appearing virtually out of nowhere. Never more than three or four train riders at a time though. With such a small crowd, the platform has plenty of room for people to choose

to sit or stand while they wait for the train. Most people are wearing headphones or staring into their phones, scrolling. Cars start pulling out of the apartment buildings too. They are all hidden inside the interior of the large residential complexes, the filling in the center of these Texas donuts. As the full southbound train arrives, people flood out, rushing onto the waiting buses. Off to work they go. In the morning passengers are heading downtown, it seems to be where all the jobs are. In the evenings, a scattered few wait for the northbound train. When it arrives, wary workers emerge, either hustling not to miss the bus or just hightailing it home.

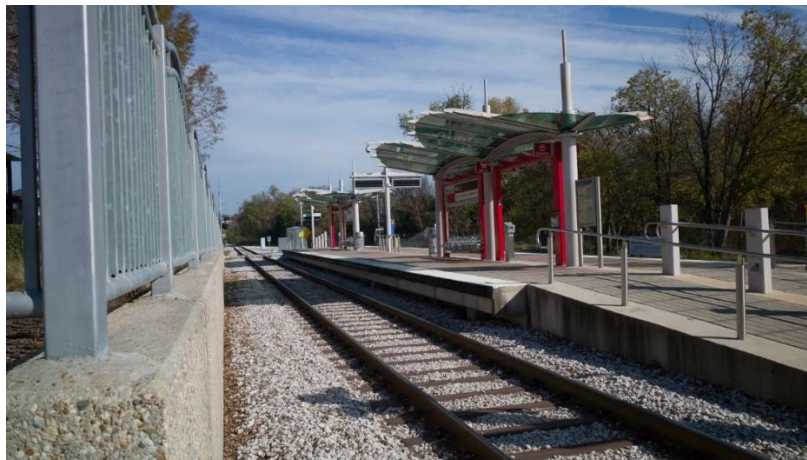


Figure 8 - Top: MLK Train Station, Bottom: View of Apartments from the Train Station
Photos by author, 2018.

Mixed Methods Survey Results

The MLK Station Neighborhood Center is the example of a neighborhood center developed in accordance with Imagine Austin. It is a mixed-use development providing apartments and spaces for small businesses which surround a transit hub, in this case a light rail spot on the red line with access to multiple buses lines. As mentioned earlier, this project has been redeveloping since 2007 and is just recently completing the bulk of its construction.

As a part of this research, seventeen people participated in the mixed-method survey at the MLK Station including nine women and eight men. A further demographic breakdown of the participants is below in Table 1.

Table 1 – Participant Demographics at MLK Station

<p><u>Race</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 70% identified as White▪ 6% identified as Asian▪ 12% identified as Latino▪ 12% identified as Mixed Race	<p><u>Age</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 59% between the ages of 26 - 34▪ 18% between the ages of 35 - 44▪ 24% between the ages of 45 - 54
<p><u>Residential Status</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 65% claimed to be residents of the neighborhood▪ 35% lived elsewhere, frequently using the transit stop to get to or from work	<p><u>Transit Use</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 65% were using the train stop and identified as transit users▪ 35% were pedestrians including those walking dogs, pushing babies in a stroller, and those walking for leisure

Relative to the demographics of the site’s census tracts, this study survey sample is not fully representative of the community as a whole as 26% of the residents are Latino, 13% are

black, 54% are white, 3% are Asian, and 4% are two or more races. This sample may be more indicative of the community directly adjacent to the train station and who is using this station for transportation. It should be noted that not all surveys were completed. Participants at this station were very willing to engage but they would only contribute until their train or bus arrived.

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

As a part of this study, participants were asked about what emotion they most often identified with in this particular area. The emotions most often chosen by participants at this study site were positive. Six people chose excitement, four people chose trust, and four others chose joy. Two respondents were not able to take part in this question as their train arrived before they could answer. One person described their feeling as anxiety due to the fear that the train was not going to arrive.

Those that identified excitement as their primary emotion in the space discussed the possibilities of the area, how they look forward to the storefronts being filled with new shops and things to do, and the thrill of walking and discovering new things.

"I can walk down the street and always find new things. So many small businesses too. There is a lot of opportunity here."

The people that chose trust often associated it with safety. They described the lack of danger and having had no previous problems with crime or violence in the neighborhood. Others mentioned the idea that the neighborhood is full of families which helped create this sense of trust.

"I've never had any issues with the neighborhood. I walk around the neighborhood and feel safe. It's mostly families that live around here and everything closes early so it's safe."

When joy was talked about it was related to having the things that participants need and convenience without hassle. Stories also frequently involved the high quality of people.

“I’m always meeting new people and they are really friendly. They’re always inviting my kids to play and that’s great for the kids. Really I’ve never met so many friendly people.”

Physical and Social Divide

As people described the physical and social element of the neighborhood, a consistent theme that came up was this idea of the old neighborhood and ‘the houses’ versus the new neighborhood. People often brought up the juxtaposition of the old and the new as well as the ‘changing’ neighborhood. These concepts were ascribed to the physical objects as well as the people in the community as well. When talking about the physical landscape, ‘the houses’ were described as ‘old’, ‘in despair’, ‘a tear down lot’ while construction was seen as bringing in newness, ‘opportunity’, a ‘welcomed change’. The people in the houses are described as the old neighborhood and tend to be described as ‘black’, ‘diverse’, or ‘low income’. While new residents are described as ‘active’, ‘young’, ‘professional’, and ‘families.’

“The neighborhood is haphazard. You have the extremes of the scale. Very rich and very poor, brand new nice houses next to tear down lots. Plus big apartment buildings like these ones. The neighborhood seems like it’s in transition. Everyone is very friendly. The locals are super nice. I’d say predominantly black. New people are mostly hipsters, young couples. Not super young college kids but young professionals, thinking about starting families.”

Belonging & Neighbors

In terms of longevity, the participants interviewed had not been living in the area very long, the longest being 18 months. This may speak to the way that the participants viewed their neighbors and the area having not been there long enough to have shared experiences.

Additionally, the connection between neighbors was not described to be very strong. Participants often knew some of their neighbors, describing them as friendly, and frequently said along the lines of “we’ll wave”, “we say hi”, or “everyone is nice.” That said, there was a sense of pride in the place even though participants had not lived there long and did not know their neighbors well. Participants did think the neighborhood had some special qualities like its walkability and easy access to amenities.

Safety

Unanimously, people felt safe walking alone in the daytime mentioning that it was even a nice place to walk as there were people on the street, greenery around, and no possible threats. When asked about walking alone at night though, the answers varied. The majority of women felt unsafe walking alone at night but often gave some context to this feeling.

“I don’t feel safe anywhere alone at night as a woman.”

“I feel safe walking my dog at night next to the apartments where there are street lights, sidewalks, and lots of people but I don’t go into the neighborhood part.”

The majority of men said that they felt safe walking alone at night in the neighborhood but it had less to do with the physical environment and more to do with their personal characteristics.

“Yeah I feel safe. I’m usually the freak on the street.”

*“I’m not scared. I’m a bad mother f*cker. Nobody f*cks with me.”*

Further discussion of these results and what the possible takeaways from this survey are will occur later on in the results section of this chapter.

Springdale Station : A Developing Neighborhood Center

Field Notes

There is no obvious place to stand in the Springdale Station Neighborhood Center. Unlike the MLK Station, the businesses and homes are not centered around a transit hub. Springdale Road is not large, but it feels substantial. There's always a steady pace of cars traveling at 30mph. Two large industrial complexes lie on either side of the road before it meets Airport Boulevard. The buildings have been repurposed from their original manufacturing uses to make way for more recreational functions like grand climbing gyms, breweries, art galleries and studios, and other small businesses. Their parking lots are bustling, and they seem to have patrons a plenty. Just south of the railroad tracks is a smaller commercial space with a convenience store, taco shop, and oddly enough a tea shop that round the corner of Springdale and Bolm Rd. The bus stop on this corner never has anyone waiting at it but there are a few people passing by while others are walking to their morning yoga class at the climbing gym or maybe to work at the coffee shop housed in the art facilities. Either way the few parking spots in front of this little commercial corner are never quite full.

Outside of the changing landscape of Springdale Rd, development is less drastic as the neighborhood is still predominantly detached single-family homes. No large apartment buildings or condominiums yet, but old homes are being torn down and new residencies are being built up every day. The new homes are grand, reaching the limitations on what can be built on these lots,

dwarfing their neighbors. With the modern designs and gated entrances, the juxtaposition of houses feels unbalanced.



Figure 8 - Top: Corner with Convenience Store & Taco Shop, Bottom: Austin Bouldering Project. Courtesy of Google Street View.

Mixed Methods Survey Results

The Springdale Station Neighborhood Center was identified as a potential place for high capacity transit with proposed higher density and added employment opportunities. The area has

been growing over the last 10 years and currently, a Planned Unit Development (PUD) was been built out with lots of local businesses moving in. This site was used as an example of a Neighborhood Center in progress.

At the Springdale Station, ten people participated in the mixed-method survey, four women and six men. A further demographic breakdown of the participants is below in Table 2.

Table 2 – Participant Demographics at Springdale Station

<p><u>Race</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 80% identified as White ▪ 10% identified as Asian ▪ 10% identified as Latino/Black 	<p><u>Age</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20% between the ages of 18 - 25 ▪ 40% between the ages of 26 - 34 ▪ 20% between the ages of 35 - 44 ▪ 20% between the ages of 65-74
<p><u>Residential Status</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50% claimed to be residents of the neighborhood ▪ 50% lived elsewhere, but were in the area utilizing an amenity; Climbing Gym, Art Studio, etc. 	<p><u>Transit Use</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10% were using the bus stop and identified as transit users ▪ 90% were pedestrians, walking for leisure, to the store, or outside community members who had parked on a neighborhood street and were walking to one of the local businesses.

This sample does not seem representative of the community as according to Census data 63% of the residents are Latino, 12% are black, 21% are white, 1% are Asian, and 2% are two or more races. One possibility for this may be due to the high number of participants that were not actually residents of the community but visitors coming to engage in activities at the local businesses instead. Additionally, this area has a high number of residents that rely on driving as

their primary mode of transportation, which may be in another consideration in understanding the demographics of this sample.

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

Participants at the Springdale Station seemed to have more mixed emotions about the place as multiple people wanted to describe their feelings in multiple emotions.

- 2 people chose excitement
- 1 person chose trust
- 1 person chose joy
- 1 person chose anger
- Trust & Sadness (1)
- Excitement, Joy, & Trust (1)
- Surprise & Excitement (1)
- Surprise & Anger

Those that had negative emotions were all people who did not live in the neighborhood. Their anger was solely driven by the lack of parking in the area. Both described feeling angry at having to drive around looking for parking.

“These cars don’t belong to any of these people living here. People just park in front of people’s houses because there is nowhere else to at the climbing gym. The parking is just so terrible.”

Those that felt trust again frequently utilized the word safety to justify their feeling, often describing the people as friendly and the neighborhood as quiet.

“It’s wonderful here. The people are great, so friendly, people from every demographic. I mean wow what could go wrong here. And you’ve got the police headquarters down the street. There is just nothing to worry about.”

Excitement was normally related to the activities happening in the area. Visitors described feeling excited to go climbing at the gym or making art in their studio. Residents that

identified this feeling talked about being excited for the process of change to be over, which is a different type of excitement that seems to be more associated with negativity.

“When I’m here, I’m usually going climbing, and it’s so fun. I’m always really excited for that.”

“This place allows me to do what I love. I’m excited to come to the studio and see what other people are making. I feel inspired and like I’m a part of this bigger community.”

“I can’t wait for new Austin to just be new Austin. The two mixing together doesn’t work.”

Physical & Social

People described this area as being an older neighborhood and used words like ‘sketchy’, and ‘unkept.’ This language has coded meaning and implications on race or class issues. Multiple participants mentioned that the physical landscape and social demographics of the area are changing but that it has not totally been transformed, in relation to this the concept of mixing was brought up as well. Language used to describe this included repurposing old buildings, chaotic, kind of a mix. Furthermore, as people were describing the aspects of the neighborhood, the word gentrification came up many times. People talked about the young people and young families as being ‘new’ and ‘white’ while the neighborhood was ‘Hispanic’, ‘low income’, or ‘older’. As a part of this transition the neighborhood is becoming ‘polished’ to bring in wealth, it will be for elites and rich people. For most people, the changing physical and cultural landscape of the area is a clear example of gentrification.

“Decades and decades of neglect and being forgotten. It’s worn out and destroyed. It’s becoming beautiful though. It’s not going to be for the middle class anymore though. People like me won’t be able to live here. It’ll be a playground for the ultra-wealthy people. It’ll just be California. It’ll be phony.”

Belonging & Sense of Community

Everyone that was interviewed saw something special about this neighborhood. Those that didn’t live in the area talked about all the activities they could do when they visited while residents talked about the neighboring farms, the greenery, and the proximity to everything they need. That said, this concept of belonging and sense of community is difficult to decipher since many of those surveyed did not actually live in the area. But it also raises interesting questions about who this neighborhood is for now and in the future. Those that did live in the neighborhood on average lived in the neighborhood for 2 years. With the most being 3 years and the least being 2 months. Participants described their neighbors as being friendly, open, similar to them, but their relationship does not seem to have much depth.

“I like my neighbors. They all seem nice, but I don’t ever really see them. Where I used to live, my neighbors were a part of my whole life. Here I don’t have to know them. I don’t have to take care of them.”

Safety

The majority of people felt unsafe here at night and much of the fear they felt came from the darkness of the place at night. People frequently commented on the lack of street lights. The danger with this darkness included not being visible to cars, not having many people around, and the people that are out at night are ‘weirdos’ or ‘desperate’.

“There’s just not a lot of lighting on these streets so the street has become more dangerous with all the cars. They can’t see you when it’s so dark.”

“It is really dark here at night. I don’t recommend walking alone at night. I’ve done it. The weirdos come out at night.”

Colony Park Station : An Underdeveloped Neighborhood Center

Field Notes

The exact location of the proposed Colony Park Station is undefined. There’s no real center to this area. A single gas station and mini mart offer the only commercial activity in the neighborhood and seems bustling most of the time. Adjacent to the railroad tracks where an elementary school lies on the other side, kids and parents stop in for coffee, snacks, and any other mini mart treats. A sheltered bus stop in front of the store along Loyola Lane is the only access to transit in the neighborhood.

Colony Park is intersected by Loyola Lane, a four-lane road that almost seems like a highway. Cars are traveling upwards of 50mph zoom past, making standing at the bus shelter feel mildly dangerous to me. Though people are walking in and out of the mini mart they are rarely walking on the busy street. Those living on the other side of the road from the mini mart cross two lanes wait on the concrete median and cross the next pair of lanes. Almost running each time.

The bus stop doesn’t have many patrons. Teenagers headed to high school elsewhere wait with headphones in. Some adults show up too. They’re headed to work or downtown too. The buses don’t run frequently and never seem to be on time. This place is far, very far, the end of the line, almost out of Austin kind of far.

Heading into the neighborhood it seems like it was designed as some sort of bedroom community subdivision. Cul de sacs meet you at every turn. The houses mostly single story, line up side by side with similar sized yards and plots. Houses are embellished with unique touches like added columns or intricate window shapes. People work in their garages or yard, hang out on the front lawn chatting together. The small roads weave all around almost aimlessly. On the other side of Loyola Lane, the neighborhood is similar maybe a little newer, built in the 80s instead of the 70s. Actually, the further into the neighborhood the newer it gets, at the very back the houses seems to be built in the last ten years. Past that it's open land, looks like farm land, but it's filling up with single family detached houses quick. Wide plans for development stand tall in front of open plots. "A new subdivision coming soon! Houses under \$300,000!" The quiet streets of deep Colony Park may not be as far away from city life as they once were.



Figure 9 - Top: View of the Gas Station from the bus stop, Bottom: Standing in the median crossing the street. Photos by author, 2018.

Mixed Methods Survey Results

As a part of Imagine Austin, Neighborhood Centers with targeted growth were identified. Colony Park was one of those place to have high capacity transit and mixed use development. Currently the neighborhood does not have the amenities this type of development would provide. It appears in the coming years the area will face new growth based on local neighborhood plans, private development of subdivisions, and the City’s vision for the area. Colony Park Station was used as an example of a site that is underdeveloped.

Seven people participated in the survey at the Colony Park Station including three women and four men. A further demographic breakdown of the participants is below in Table 3.

Table 3 – Participant Demographics at Colony Park Station

<u>Race</u>	<u>Age</u>
▪ 43% identified as Black	▪ 14% between the ages of 18 - 25
▪ 29% identified as Latino	▪ 14% between the ages of 26 - 34
▪ 14% identified as Mixed Race	▪ 29% between the ages of 35 - 44
▪ 14% identified as White	▪ 29% between the ages of 55 - 64
	▪ 14% between the ages of 65 -74
<u>Residential Status</u>	<u>Transit Use</u>
▪ 86% claimed to be residents of the neighborhood	▪ 100% were using the train stop and identified as transit users
▪ 14% lived elsewhere, using the transit stop to get to or from work at her daughter’s house	

The diversity of the people using public transportation may not be a representative sample of those living in Colony Park. This area is heavily reliant on automobile travel and those interviewed seem to be more diverse than the general population.

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

This site had the smallest number of people sampled was a smaller sample but the complexity of place and their impassioned stories brought to light a mixture of feelings about this neighborhood. 2 people felt trust, 2 people felt joy, 2 people felt fear, and 1 person felt disgust.

The two people that identified fear as being their feeling cited specific intense emotional experiences that led them to feeling this way. Both experiences were related to the people in the neighborhood.

“A 16-year-old stole my Rav 4 from my driveway. I tried to stop him but him and his friends beat me up. I had to go to the hospital. I’ve got to move out of here. Westlake seems nice but it’s expensive.”

People that felt trust again talked about safety in the neighborhood. They talked about feeling trust in their neighbors. They identify with them and trust them to look out for each other.

“There’s mostly just blacks and Hispanics here. We all get along. Families with kids in school all day and parents coming home at night.”

The feeling of joy seemed to be again related to the people and for the participants to live their lives the way they want to.

*“I work for myself. I live my life here the way I want without any distractions.
There just aren’t bad things that happen here.”*

Belonging & Sense of Community

The majority of them people living in this neighborhood have been living there much longer than those interviewed in the other places. All but one person had lived there for three years or more, up to 22 years. There must be a deep sense of place having lived in the area for so many years. It was clear in the way that people talked about their relationships with their neighbors as well. Participants mentioned having BBQs with their neighbors, watching each other’s houses and pets or fighting with them. People had opinions and strong feelings about their neighbors, good and bad. These relationships seem like an important part of belonging and a sense of community but when asked about what they thought made the neighborhood special, many residents had little to say. Someone commented on the housing prices and the nice houses, but most people identified it as a normal neighborhood. Nothing very special.

Safety

Loyola Lane seemed to divide the neighborhood into two and it appears that those from one side of the street had a different experience with safety than those living on the other side of the street. Some of the participants interviewed felt very safe in their neighborhood while others felt that their street was a haven from criminal activity. The main thoroughfare with speeds of 50mph did not seem to bother anyway though. No one cited this as a safety issue.

Analysis & Discussion

With the compilation of these surveys from each site, comparisons can be made that may speak to the overall success and implications of CodeNext and Imagine Austin in these

Neighborhood Centers. Using this visceral mixed method approach participants were able to engage in a conversation around their embodied experiences and this qualitative data speaks to the social and political systems at play in their community. The addition of this personalized, place specific knowledge can give insight into how belonging, sense of place, and safety are being felt and experienced in the reality of these Neighborhood Centers.

The way participants in each neighborhood discussed the physical objects and space alluded to larger systems of inequality within the neighborhoods. This is particular in the ways that participants described the divide between old and new. Participants at MLK Station and Springdale Station similarly articulated the physical spaces of the neighborhood being in juxtaposition with one another. The older houses being seen as ‘sketchy’, ‘neglected,’ and generally unworthy of holding space in this new environment of progress. Participants often spoke candidly about their distaste for the older physical environment. Though few were ever negative about the ‘locals’ or the population that had been living there longer, it is clear that these critiques of the physical elements are a coded judgment on the old residents of the area. Many people are willfully separating the physical form from the social, which allows them to endorse new development and ultimately the exclusion of old residents while not having to consider any of the racial or economic repercussions. This mentality promotes the exacerbation of marginalized communities and perpetuates racist, classist, and sexist systems that regulate who space is for and how it can be used.

The feelings of participants in the developed and in-progress neighborhoods reflect the physical divide of the community as well as the social strife at play as the areas have been developing. The topic of the physical and social divide, of the old versus new, did not present itself in the conversations with participants in the underdeveloped neighborhood center,

indicating the development of Imagine Austin's planned neighborhood centers may actually be diluting social fabric instead of enhancing it. With these results from the survey, questions arise about who is being 'respected and valued' and what kind of community character does the City want to maintain in the neighborhood centers as they have stated as a goal of Imagine Austin.

Additionally, it should be noted that participants in the developed and in-progress neighborhood centers did not have the longevity of residency compared to participants of the underdeveloped neighborhood have. The newer residents of the developed and in-progress neighborhood centers do not have the same social networks and connections to the place as residents in the underdeveloped neighborhood center, which may speak to why they have such strong judgements as it is may be unfamiliar and culturally foreign to them.

To this point, responses to questions regarding neighbors in the underdeveloped area gave insight into the way community members seemed to share experiences, memories, and commonalities. Residents had more complex relationships with their neighbors, likely, for one reason, that they had spent so much time living next to them. The longevity possibly takes away the otherness that some of the participants in the developed and in-progress neighborhood may be feeling when they describe the physical elements and social aspects of their neighborhoods. To combat this otherness of the old and new residents of these neighborhood centers, the city has practices that promote social interactions and social relationship ties that are supposed to help the neighborhood define its own sense of community but it is unclear how successful these practices are in creating community cohesion. In actuality, the planned Neighborhood Centers may be creating tensions between communities as development is implemented.

The emotional responses of Plutchik's wheel of emotions also shed light on the reasons and way neighborhood share feelings. Those that felt positive emotions in neighborhoods had

commonalities in the reasoning for their feelings. Excitement was often associated with change or the potentiality of the place. Participants spoke about their hope for their lives in the communities and that made it feel exciting to be there. Those that discussed trust always associated this feeling with the safety of the place. This feeling of trust, though, was sometimes at odds with responses to the question of walking alone at night and there are other possible interpretations to explore. Trust could also be associated with the comfort to be oneself and the idea that there would be no need to fear others as community members share similarities. Those that reacted to the place with joy cited the people there as being the reason for their experience of this feeling. It could be argued that all of these feelings relate back to the fundamental qualities of place.

As the city moves forward with the development of Imagine Austin's neighborhood centers, it is critical that they question their assumptions on how they are fostering these dynamics of place. Based on the findings of this study, their current methodology and values are sustaining and perpetuating social and economic inequalities. On the surface, the goals of Imagine Austin are well-meaning but the execution of this vision of livable, connected, communities has proven to be divisive. This small scale visceral approach has illuminated these socio-spatial issues.

Chapter 4: Conclusions – Lessons for Planning

The intent of this study was to explore visceral approaches as a planning tool. With thorough research on the theory and concepts of these approaches in the field of human geography, this project adapted and tested a tool that had not been previously utilized in planning practices. The mixed-method study attempted to create hyperlocal evaluations of the socio-spatial issues of developed, developing, and underdeveloped places. The tool invited individuals to share their feelings about their communities, and their stories drew the socio-spatial landscape of the three distinct Neighborhood Centers. The findings of this study reinforce the idea that changes in the built environment are not isolated or separate from the social realm. As Neighborhood Centers physically transform, economic, social, and political dynamics evolve, ultimately impacting the sense of place, belonging, and safety of a community.

Though the results of the case studies are important to this specific place, the outcomes speak to larger issues in the planning process. As Austin continues to plan for transportation and growth development projects with well-meaning goals and values, it is still unclear how the city is addressing race and class as a part of the development conversation and in the implementation of these projects. This study identified people speaking about the physical form with disregard for the social aspects of the community; a disconnect between the ‘unkept’ built environment and who lives in these places. The language and outlooks expressed by white community members in developed or in progress neighborhood centers gives insight into how planning and development are promoted and how these practices still are trying to manage and control people in cities. Existing communities are transformed by the implementation of planned projects, which inadvertently create social and physical boundaries. Longtime residents struggle to remain relevant as planned growth views their spaces as out of place in the new context. With this

continued devaluation of marginalized people, planning needs to take a critical look at how it can ensure people currently living in underdeveloped areas will be the ones reaping the rewards of their neighborhoods redevelopment into livable, connected places.

Additionally, the planning and development process, in these cases, has shown to actually be tearing the social fabric apart instead of creating the inclusive and respectful environment proposed. The ultimate paradox of planning is that as communities are planned, communities are also deconstructed. Before planned projects are executed and social capital is diminished, this hyperlocal evaluation of place could be a valuable tool in helping planners understand the social and emotional landscape of a community. By engaging with this type of process, there is potential to gather data that identifies the values and priorities of a community to create place-specific practices for the place-specific issues.

The complexity of individual experiences and feelings may not have the power to make larger citywide changes in the planning process, but there is a clear connection that using these methods when engaging in hyper localized community issues can be valuable for influencing outcomes. People that occupy and embody these spaces on a daily basis have to be a part of the conversation around development in their communities. Municipalities only perpetuate socio-spatial issues like those seen at the MLK and Springdale Stations without understanding how the community experiences belonging, place, and safety. Without considering place-based strategies for engagement in planning for development, it is likely the tensions of the physical and social divide will continue to cause strife in our communities and planned development will be in direct opposition with community values.

That said these visceral processes are time consuming and require authentic engagement on the part of the planner or community organizer as well. A particular limitation of this study

was its inability to build real trust with participants to allow for deep inquiry and genuine, vulnerable responses. For planners to truly engage with this type of approach, they have to commit themselves to getting to know each individual community and the individuals that make up those communities to understand what exactly the best plan for the specific place is. Instead of making broad generalizations to create solutions for the city as a whole, taking the time to work on the smaller scale, acknowledging the differences of the people and places, may be able to create the intended outcome of compact and connected complete communities. Using visceral approaches and local engagement strategies has the potential to transform our communities on a small scale as it diverges from traditional planning practices relying on larger social and political systems.

Appendix : Survey

Do you live in this area? If so, for how long? If not, how far away do you live?

Can you describe to a defining moment for you when you moved into this neighborhood? How did that moment make you feel?

How do you describe this neighborhood? What makes this neighborhood different or special?

Using this color wheel, how do you most often feel here in this area? Why?

Spin the wheel. Describe a time when you felt...in this neighborhood.

Austin is a growing and changing city. What are the changes that have happened in this neighborhood? How do you feel about these changes?

What is your relationship like with your neighbors? Do you feel connected to them? Do you share similar values or traditions?

How do you normally travel to work? Car, bike, walking, bus? Why? If you, don't use public transit, how do you feel about public transportation? Is it symbolically important you? Do you think about using it?

How do you normally travel for leisure? Car, bike, walking, bus? Why? If you, don't use public transit, how do you feel about public transportation? Is it symbolically important you? Do you think about using it?

What does it feel like when you are walking here alone in the daytime? How safe do you feel? Why?

What does it feel like when you are walking here alone in the nighttime? How safe do you feel? Why?

In your mind, how do you define a complete community?

Would you describe this neighborhood as a complete community? Why?

How would you improve your neighborhood?

Gender : Female Male Non-binary Prefer not to answer

Age : 18-25 26-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75+ Prefer not to answer

Race : Asian Black Latino White Other Prefer not to answer

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